THE NABOB

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THE NABOB

VOL. I.

THE NABOB

A STORY OF PARISIAN LIFE AND MANNERS

BY

ALPHONSE DAUDET

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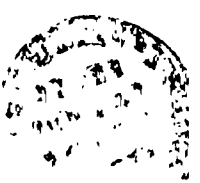
TRANSLATED BY E. CLAVEQUIN



IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

WHEN, a few months ago, M. Daudet's *Nabob* first made its appearance in Paris, it produced a profound impression, not only because of the intrinsic beauty of the dramatic story which it relates, and of the powerful vein of satire running throughout the book, but also, and chiefly, because people recognised, or thought they recognised, well-known characters. The newspapers published keys—Jenkins, Monpavon, Cardailhac, Felicia, and even the office porter, that chatty and excitable Passajon, whose memoirs are certainly some of the best and most readable parts of the work, were all

surely recognised. Jenkins was identified with a fashionable English doctor practising in Paris, who, of course, lost no time in denying the resemblance; Cardailhac, or rather the gentleman who is thought to have been aimed at by that name in the novel, also wrote indignant letters of denial; Felicia, whose real name, respected by the press, had only been whispered about, wisely abstained from drawing greater notoriety on herself by denying anything. If Monpavon denied nothing, it may be that having perhaps really committed suicide, as we are told in the book, he could not but be silent.

Let us say, however, that nearly all the names bandied about, in connection with this novel, are, at most, more or less likely guesses, more or less probable suppositions. The author himself, who ought to know best, declares that all his characters are fanciful, imaginary, with

the exception of two only, viz., the 'Nabob,' and the 'Duke de Mora.' Of the first he says: 'I knew the true Nabob in 1864. I was then occupying an official position, which imposed great reserve on me in my visits to that hospitable and fastuous Levantine.' The Duke is, of course, the well-known President of the *Corps Législatif*, during the Empire, of whom the author writes: 'I painted him with that impertinent and serene smile, which he always wore whenever I happened to see him, and with which he liked to appear in public, in his double character of Richelieu-Brummell. Let History speak of the statesman. In my work of fiction, I have drawn the worldly man, whom he was and wished to appear, feeling certain that, if he were still alive, he would not dislike to have been painted thus.'

That M. Daudet had ample opportunities of studying his aristocratic model, is plain enough

from the fact that he was at one time *attaché au cabinet* of that high personage. That the portrait he gave to the world is a true one, even in its minutest details, stands confessed by the unanimous voice of the French press.

THE TRANSLATOR

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THE NABOB.

CHAPTER I.

DR. JENKINS' PATIENTS.

STANDING upon the porch of his little mansion in the Rue de Lisbonne, freshly shaved, his eyes sparkling, his mouth half open with gladness, his long indistinctly grey hair spread out upon the broad collar of his coat, square-shouldered, robust and sound like an oak, the illustrious Irish doctor, Robert Jenkins, knight of the Medjidgee, and of the distinguished order of Charles the Third of Spain, member of several learned and benevolent societies, president and founder of 'The Bethlehem Charity,' in short, Jenkins, he of the Jenkins

pearls—globules with an arsenical basis—in other words, the fashionable doctor of 1864, the busiest man in Paris, was preparing to step into his carriage one morning at the end of November, when a window opened on the first story on the inner court of the mansion, and a woman's voice asked timidly :—

'Will you be back for breakfast, Robert?'

Oh, with what a genuine and honest smile did the fine head of the philanthropic savant suddenly light up ; and in the affectionate greeting which his eyes flashed up yonder, towards the white morning dress which appeared behind the uplifted curtains, how easily one might have guessed one of those conjugal passions, serene and secure, which habit tightens with all the suppleness and solidity of its bands.

'No, Madame Jenkins.' He loved to give her thus publicly the title which belonged to her as a legitimate wife, as if, in so doing, he found an inward satisfaction, a sort of conscience acquittal towards the woman who made life so bright for him.

'No, don't wait for me this morning. I breakfast at Place Vendôme.'

'Ah, yes!—At the Nabob's,' said the fair Madame Jenkins, with a strongly marked shade of respect for that Arabian Night personage, about whom all Paris had been speaking for the last month; then, after a little hesitation, she whispered very tenderly, very low, between the heavy hangings, and for the Doctor's ear alone:

'And above all, do not forget what you promised me.'

This must have been something very difficult to keep, for, on being reminded of his promise, the brows of the philanthropist knitted, his smile became, so to speak, petrified, and his whole face assumed an expression of incredible hardness; but this did not last more than a moment.

By the bedside of their rich patients the faces of our fashionable doctors become expert in lying.

With his tenderest, his most cordial look, he answered, showing a double row of dazzling teeth:

'What I promised shall be done, Madame Jenkins. Now, go in quickly, and shut your window; the mist is cold this morning.'

Yes, the mist was cold, but as light as a vapour of snow, and, hanging behind the windows of the spacious brougham, it lit up with soft tints the newspaper which the Doctor held unfolded in his hands.

Further away, in the populous, narrow, and dark quarters, in trading and working Paris, people never know that pretty morning mist which tarries in the broad avenues; from an early hour, the activity of the waking morn, the going and coming of market cars, of omnibuses, of heavy waggons, shaking as they go along their iron gear, have soon chopped it up, torn it into shreds, and scattered it abroad. Each passer-by carries a little away in his threadbare coat, in his muffler which shows the woof,

in his coarse gloves which he rubs against each other. It soaks into the shivering blouses, the waterproofs thrown over working petticoats, is melted by all the breaths, feverish with sleeplessness or alcohol, is swallowed up by empty stomachs, spreads into the opening shops, the black court-yards, along staircases whose balusters and walls it damps, rising up as far as the fireless attics. That is why there remains so little of it out in the streets. But in that spacious and airy portion of Paris where Jenkins' patients dwelt, on those broad boulevards planted with trees, those desert quays, the fog hung immaculate, in innumerable folds, here light, there fleecy, like cotton-wool. There was in the atmosphere something cosy, discreet, almost luxurious, because the sun, behind the lazy apparel of his rising, was beginning to spread a soft crimson glow which gave to the fog, as it enveloped up to their roofs the lines of palatial mansions, the appearance of white muslin

thrown over scarlet cloth. You would have thought it was a great curtain, protecting the light and tardy sleep of the rich; a thick curtain, behind which nothing was heard but the discreet closing of a coach door, the tin pails of the milkmaids, the bells of a herd of she-asses, passing at a trot, and followed by the short and panting breath of their driver, and the dull rumbling of Jenkins' brougham commencing its daily round.

First of all, to the 'Hôtel de Mora.' This was a magnificent palatial residence, situated on the quay D'Orsay, quite close to the Spanish Embassy, whose long terraces were a continuation of its own.

Its principal entrance was in the Rue de Lille, and another door led to the water-side.

Between two high walls covered with ivy, and connected together by an imposing arch, the brougham shot like an arrow; its arrival was heralded by two strokes of a resounding bell, which drew Jenkins from the ecstasy into which

the perusal of his paper seemed to have plunged him. The noise of the wheels was deadened on reaching the sand of a vast court, and the carriage stopped after an elegant circuit, right against the porch of the mansion which was surmounted by a dome-like awning. Through the denseness of the fog could be perceived some ten carriages in a line, and along an avenue of laburnum trees, perfectly dry in this season, and their trunks all bare, the profiles of English grooms walking the saddle-horses of the Duke.

Everything revealed a well-ordained state, sedate, grand and self-conscious. 'It is of no use my coming early, there are always others here before me,' said Jenkins to himself on seeing the row of carriages, where his brougham took its place; but, certain that he would not have to wait, he ascended with head erect, and a look of tranquil authority, that official flight of steps, which so many anxious ambitions, so many faltering steps mounted every day.

From the very antechamber, high and resounding like a church, and which two large wood fires, together with the stoves burning night and day, filled up with beaming life, the luxury of this residence came to you in warm and heady whiffs. It reminded you, at the same time, of a hot-house and a stove-room. Much heat and much light, white wainscotings, white marbles, immense windows, nothing stifling or close, an equable atmosphere, prepared to surround some rare, delicate and nervous existence! Jenkins basked in this fictitious sun of wealth. He greeted with a 'Good morning, my friends,' the powdered porter, with his broad golden shoulder-belt, the footmen in their smalls, their gold and blue livery, all standing to do him honour; he touched with his finger the great cage of striated monkeys, full of sharp cries and capers, and took, humming, the light marble staircase, covered with a carpet as thick as sward, which led to the Duke's apartments. For the last six months that the good doctor came to the

'Hôtel de Mora,' he had not yet lost the fresh physical impression which the merriness and liveliness of the house ever gave him.

Although this was the house of the greatest functionary of the Empire, there was nothing here to awaken the idea of administration or of its cases full of dusty papers.

The Duke had only consented to assume the high dignities of Minister of State, and President of the Council, on condition that he should not leave his own mansion.

He went to the Ministry one or two hours a day only, just the time to affix indispensable signatures, and he gave audience in his own bedroom.

At this moment, in spite of the early hour, the withdrawing-room was full.

There could be seen grave and anxious faces, Provincial Prefects, with shaven lips, and administrative whiskers, a little less arrogant in this antechamber than in their prefectures; magistrates, with an austere look, and quiet

manners; Députés, full of importance; the big-wigs of finance; rural, but well-to-do iron masters, amongst whom could be noticed, here and there, the spare ambitious frame of a 'Substitut,' of a Councillor of Prefecture, in the garb of petitioners—black coat and white tie;—and all of them, standing, seated, grouped or solitary, seemed with their eager and silent looks to pierce this high door, closed over their fate, and through which they would presently issue triumphant or dejected.

Jenkins rapidly crossed the crowd, and every one followed with an envious eye this newcomer, whom the usher, with his chain of office, cold and correct, seated at a table by the side of the door, welcomed with a little smile at once respectful and familiar.

'With whom is he?' asked the Doctor, pointing to the Duke's room. In a whisper, and with a slightly ironical wink, the usher mumbled a name which would have stirred indignation in all these high personages had they heard it;

for they had waited there already an hour, until the opera costumier had terminated his audience. A noise of voices, a jet of light . . . Jenkins had just entered the Duke's apartment. He never waited, not he.

Standing with his back to the chimney, dressed in a light-blue fur jacket, the soft tones of which gave delicacy to an energetic and haughty head, the President of the Council was having drawn under his own eyes a Pierrette costume which the Duchess was to wear at her approaching ball, and he conveyed his directions with the same gravity as if he were dictating the draft of a new law.

'Goffer the frill very fine, and leave the cuffs plain.'—'Morning, Jenkins,—With you in one moment.'

Jenkins bowed, and walked a few steps in the immense room. The windows, opening on a garden which extended as far as the Seine, took in one of the finest views of Paris; the bridges, the Tuileries, the Louvre, through a

network of black trees which seemed as if drawn with Indian-ink on the floating background of fog.

A broad but very low bed, raised on an estrade a few steps high, two or three little screens of lacquer-work, with vague and capricious gilding, betrayed a fear of cold carried to an excess, as did also the double doors and the carpets of raised wool. Different kinds of seats, long chairs, chauffeuses, scattered here and there, all of them of a round, indolent and voluptuous shape, composed the furniture of this celebrated chamber, where the gravest as well as the lightest questions were treated with the same serious tone.

Against the wall hung a beautiful portrait of the Duchess; on the chimney-piece stood a bust of the Duke, the work of Felicia Ruys, which had obtained at the late 'Salon' the honours of a first medal.

'Well, Jenkins, how are you this morning?' said His Grace, approaching him,

whilst the costumier picked up his designs of fashions, scattered about on all the arm-chairs.

'And you, dear Duke? I thought you looked rather pale at the "Variétés."'

'Nonsense! I never was so well in my life. Your globules work wonderfully. I feel as fresh, as vigorous. . . . When I think that only six months ago I felt absolutely done up!'

Without saying a word, Jenkins had placed his big head against the fur of the Minister of State, on the spot where the heart beats in common mortals. He listened one moment, whilst His Grace continued to speak in that indolent and fatigued tone which characterised his peculiar distinction:

'Whom were you with, last night, Doctor? Who was that tall bronzed Tartar who was laughing so loud in the front seat of your box?'

'That was the Nabob, Monsieur le Duc—that famous Jansoulet, who is the talk of the town just now.'

'I might have guessed that. They were all looking at him. The actresses played at him only. You know him? what sort of man is he?'

'Know him—that is to say, he is a patient of mine.—Thanks, dear Duke, I have done. You are all right there.—A month ago, when he arrived in Paris, the change of climate somewhat tried him. He sent for me, and has since taken me into his friendship.—All I know of him is, that he possesses a colossal fortune, made at Tunis, in the service of the Bey, a loyal heart, a generous disposition, in which ideas of humanity——!'

'At Tunis, eh?' interrupted the Duke, who had very little of sentimental or humanitarian in his nature. 'Why, then, that name of Nabob?'

'Oh, the Parisians are not so particular. For them, any rich stranger is a Nabob, no matter where he comes from—but this one looks what he is called:—a copper-coloured complexion, eyes like burning coals, and, to

sum up, a gigantic fortune, which he uses, I do not fear to say so, in the noblest and most intelligent way. It is to him that I owe it'—here the Doctor assumed a modest look—'that I owe it to be able at last to found Bethlehem, for the nursing of babies, an institution which a morning paper, the *Messager*, I think, which I was reading just now, calls "the great philanthropical idea of the age."'

The Duke cast an absent look upon the paper which Jenkins held to him. He was not the man to be caught by puffing phrases.

'He must be very rich, that Monsieur Jansoulet,' he said coldly; 'he provides the money for Cardailhac's theatre, Monpavon makes him pay his debts, Bois-Landry stocks his stables for him, and old Schwalbach provides him with a picture gallery. All that takes a lot of cash.'

Jenkins began to laugh.

'My dear Duke, you are that poor Nabob's constant preoccupation. From the moment he arrived here, with the firm intention of becoming

a Parisian, a man of the world, he took you for his model in everything, and I will not conceal from you that he is very anxious to study his model by closer observation.'

'I know, I know. Monpavon has already asked me to bring him. But I must wait, I must see. With those great fortunes, which come no one knows from where, one must be careful. Oh, I do not say no. Were I to meet him somewhere else than in my house, at the theatre, for example, or at a party——'

'Madame Jenkins intends to give a party next month. If you would do us the honour——'

'I will go to you with pleasure, dear Doctor; and should the Nabob be there, I should not object to his being introduced to me.'

At this moment the usher on duty half opened the door.

'The Home-Minister is in the blue drawing-room. He has only one word to say to Your Grace. The Prefect of Police is still below, waiting in the gallery.'

'All right,' said the Duke, 'I am coming. But I should like to settle about this costume first. Look here, Mr.—what's your name? what shall we decide about those frills? Farewell, Doctor. Nothing else to do but go on with the pearls, I suppose?'

'Go on with the pearls,' said Jenkins, bowing; and he went out all radiant from the two strokes of good fortune which came upon him at the same time—the honour of receiving the Duke, and the pleasure of obliging his dear Nabob. In the ante-room, the crowd of petitioners which he crossed was still more numerous than when he had come; new-comers had joined the patients of the first hour, others went up the stairs, looking anxious and pale, and in the court, carriages continued to come up, and place themselves in a circle on two rows, gravely, solemnly, whilst the great question of frills or no frills on the cuffs was being discussed upstairs with no less solemnity.

'To the club,' said Jenkins to his coachman.

The brougham rolled along the quays, crossed the river, and gained the Place de la Concorde, which had no longer the same look as before. The fog opened in the direction of the 'Garde-Meuble,' and the Greek Temple of the Madeleine, showing here and there the white aigrette of a water-spout, the arcade of a palace, the upper part of a statue, the clumps of trees of the Tuileries gardens, looking so starved near the grating. The veil, not yet raised, but torn in places, showed fragments of the horizon, and there could be seen, on the avenue leading to the Arc-de-Triomphe, breaks, passing at a fast trot, and loaded with coachmen and grooms, 'dragons de l'impératrice,' 'guides' all belaced, and covered with furs, going two and two, in long files, with a clinking of curbs and spurs, with the snorting of fresh horses; all that, tipped with the light of a sun as yet invisible, but breaking the opaqueness of the air and withdrawing again behind it in masses, like a rapid vision of the morning splendour of that quarter.

Jenkins alighted at the corner of the Rue Royale. From the top to the bottom of the great gambling house, servants were stirring, shaking the carpets, airing the saloons where floated the fume of cigars, where heaps of fine ashes, yet burning, crumbled down in the hearth, whereas upon the green tables, yet quivering with the play of the night, a few lights in silver candlesticks were still burning, and their flames went straight up in the dull light of the day. The noise, the going and coming, ceased at the third floor, where a few members of the club had apartments. Among these was the Marquis de Monpavon, to whom Jenkins was going.

'Is that you, Doctor? Deuce take you! What o'clock is it then?—Am not at home.'

'Not even for your physician?'

'For nobody—question of propriety, dear fellow—No matter; come in, just the same. Warm your feet for one moment whilst Francis finishes doing my hair.'

Jenkins penetrated into the bedroom, meaningless like all furnished apartments, and approached the fire, where curling-irons of all sizes were getting hot. In the adjoining laboratory, separated from the bedroom by an Algerian hanging, the Marquis de Monpavon entrusted himself to the manipulations of his valet. Odours of patchouli, cold-cream, burnt horn and hair, escaped from the narrow space; and from time to time, when Francis came to fetch an iron, Jenkins caught a glimpse of a toilet table loaded with a thousand little instruments in ivory, mother of pearl, and steel:—files, scissors, tufts and brushes, bottles, little cups and cosmetics, labelled and placed in a row; and amongst all this display, the long, dry hand of an old man, awkward and trembling, with nails as carefully tended as those of a Japanese painter, which hesitated in the midst of these minute wares and doll-like porcelains.

As he was making up his face—and this was the longest and most complicated of his

morning occupations—Monpavon kept talking with the Doctor and giving him an account of his ailments, the good effect of the pearls, which, said he, made him feel quite youthful again; and, from afar, not seeing him, you might have thought you heard Mora's voice, so thoroughly had he appropriated Mora's way of speaking—it was the same unfinished phrases, ending in ps—ps—ps, half muttered, interspersed anyhow in his speech, a kind of aristocratic lisp, drawling and lazy, in which a thorough contempt for the vulgar art of speech was apparent. Every one in the Duke's entourage sought to imitate that accent, those contemptuous intonations, with an affectation of simplicity.

Jenkins, finding that his visit was getting rather long, had risen to depart.

'Good-bye, I am going—I shall see you at the Nabob's, I suppose?'

'Yes. Intend to breakfast there—promised to bring him—thingabob—what's his name?—You know—for the great business of—ps—ps—

else had rather not go—true menagerie, that house.'

The Irishman was obliged, in spite of his goodnature, to admit that the society was rather mixed at his friend's. However, one should not be angry with the man. He did not know better, poor fellow.

'Not know better—won't learn,' said Monpavon, sharply—'instead of taking advice from experienced men,—ps—ps—ps—allows any fellow to sponge on him. Have you seen the horses which Bois-Landry got him to buy? The beasts are mere shoddy. Paid twenty thousand francs for them. Bet you Bois-Landry had them for six thousand?'

'Oh, pfui! a gentleman!' said Jenkins, with the indignant tone of a noble mind refusing to believe in evil.

Monpavon went on as if he had not heard:

'And all because the horses came from Mora's stable.'

'It is true the Duke is his hobby, the dear

Nabob! Well, I will make him very happy by telling him——'

The Doctor stopped, embarrassed.

'Telling him what, Jenkins?'

Rather sheepish, Jenkins must confess that he had obtained leave from his Grace to present to him his friend Jansoulet. He had hardly completed his sentence when a long spectre with a flabby face, hair and whiskers of many colours, rushed out of the closet into the room. With both hands he held, crossed round his fleshless but straight neck, a morning gown of light violet-spotted silk, in which he used to wrap himself like a bonbon in its paper cover. The most salient part of that face was a long, hooked nose, all shining with cold-cream, and the quick sharp look of his eyes, too clear for the heavy and wrinkled eyelids which covered them. All Jenkins's patients had that look.

Monpavon must have been strongly moved to show himself thus divested of all prestige. In fact, it was with blanched lips and a changed

voice that he addressed the Doctor, sharply, without lisping this time, and without stopping at all:

'Look here, old fellow! no tricks between us, if you please! We meet before the same porringer, but I leave you your share, and I must insist that you shall leave me mine.'

The astonished look of Jenkins did not stop him:

'Be this said once for all. I promised the Nabob to introduce him to the Duke as I once introduced you, yourself; don't you meddle with what concerns me alone.' ..

Jenkins laid his hand upon his heart, protesting his innocence. He never had meant— Monpavon was certainly too much the Duke's friend for any other— How could he suppose—?

'I don't suppose anything,' said the old gentleman, calmer, but still cold. 'I only wanted to have a clear explanation with you on that point.'

The Irishman held out to him his large open hand.

'My dear Marquis, explanations are always clear between men of honour.'

'Honour is a big word, Jenkins; let us say "men of tenue," of style—that will do.' And that 'tenue' to which he appealed as his supreme guide of conduct recalling him suddenly to the sentiment of his comical situation, the Marquis put one finger into the open palm of his friend and retraced his steps with considerable dignity behind the curtain. The other left the apartment to continue his round.

What a splendid practice this Jenkins had! Nothing but princely mansions, warm staircases covered with flowers at every landing; alcoves quilted with silk, where disease made itself discreet and elegant, where nothing betrayed the brutal hand which throws on a bed of misery those who never cease to work till the hour for dying has sounded. Strictly speaking, the patients of the Irish doctor were not ill.

They would not have been admitted into an hospital. Their organs were too weak to stand the violence of a shock; but the seat of their disease was nowhere in particular, and a physician would have vainly bent over them to find the throbs of suffering in these bodies which exhaustion and the silence of death inhabited already. They were worn out, done up, consumed by an absurd life; but they found that life so good yet, that they were anxious to prolong it. And Jenkins's pearls became famous for that momentary vigour which they gave to these overridden existences.

'Doctor, I pray you, let me go to this evening's ball,' said a young woman, helpless on her lounge, and whose voice was hardly more than a breath.

'You shall go, my dear child.'

And she went; and never had she appeared more beautiful.

'Doctor, I must be present at to-morrow's Council of Ministers, were I to die for it.'

And he was present, and he gained a triumph of eloquence and ambitious diplomacy. After— Oh! after— But no matter! To the last day Jenkins's clients went about, showed themselves, and put off the devouring egotism of the crowd. They died on their feet like men of the world.

After he had turned and turned, now here, now there, visiting as he went every millionnaire and titled lord in the Chaussée d'Antin, the Champs Elysées, the Faubourg St. Honoré, the fashionable Doctor arrived at the angle of the Cours-la-Reine and the Rue François Premier, before a round façade which occupied the corner of the quay, and penetrated into a ground-floor apartment, which did not in the least resemble those he had visited all the morning. The imaginative and curious taste of an artist displayed itself from the entrance, in tapestries decorating the walls, in old windows, whose ribands of lead divided a mixed and discreet light, in a gigantic saint of carved wood which

stood opposite a Japanese monster, with eyes starting out, and a back covered with finely overlapping scales. The little servant who opened the door held an Arabian greyhound, taller than himself, by the leash.

'Madame Constance is gone to mass,' said he, 'and Mademoiselle is in her studio.—We have been working ever since six o'clock this morning,' added the child, with a lamentable yawn, the contagion of which infected the dog, and made him open his large red mouth, full of sharp teeth.

Jenkins, who entered so composedly the Minister of State's room, trembled a little as he raised the hanging which concealed the open entrance into the studio. It was a magnificent sculptor's atelier, whose round corner façade formed a large bay window, bordered with pilasters, and let in the light, just now toned down by the fog. This studio was more ornamented than such apartments usually are; for the plaster stains, the pools of water, the

boasting-tools, the clay, give them an air of resemblance with masons' yards; but here, a woman's love of show had added something to the artistic usefulness of the place. Here were green shrubs in all corners, a few good pictures against the white walls, and here and there, on oak supports, two or three works of Sebastian Ruys;—his last work, one which had been exhibited after his death, was here also, covered with a black gauze.

The mistress of the place, Felicia Ruys, the daughter of the celebrated sculptor, herself already known to fame by two masterpieces, her father's bust and that of the Duke of Mora, stood in the middle of the studio, modelling a figure. Felicia was dressed in a riding habit of blue cloth, with long pendent folds, a fichu of Chinese silk rolled round her neck like a man's cravat, her black and fine hair carelessly collected on her little head of an antique form. She was working with great earnestness, and this gave to her beauty a condensation and

closeness of features full of attentive and pleased expression. All this changed at once when the Doctor came in.

'Is that you?' she said, abruptly, as if awakened out of a dream. 'You rang, I suppose? I had not heard.'

A look of weariness and exhaustion suddenly spread over her adorable face, out of which all expression was driven, except in the eyes, where the fictitious brightness, due to Jenkins's pearls, was heightened still by a natural wildness.

Oh, how humble, how full of devotion the voice of the Doctor became as he answered her:

'Does your work absorb you so much, dear Felicia? You are doing something new; it looks very pretty!'

He approached the as yet shapeless cast, which vaguely outlined a group of two animals, one of which, a greyhound, was running at full speed, and was expressive of motion to a degree truly wonderful.

'This idea struck me last night, and I began

this work by lamp-light. It is my poor Kadour, who does not enjoy this,' said the young girl, casting a look of caressing kindness on the grey-hound as the little page tried to keep its legs separated for the pose.

Jenkins said, in a paternal tone, that she was wrong thus to tire herself, and taking her wrist with ecclesiastic precautions:

'Let me see; I am sure you are feverish.'

On feeling that hand upon hers, Felicia made a movement of repulsion.

'Leave me alone. Leave me alone. Your pearls can do nothing. When I do not work I am weary, weary to death; my ideas are of the colour of that water there, brackish and dull. To begin life and be disgusted with it, that is hard. I envy my poor Constance, who passes her days on a chair without speaking a word, but smiling at her recollections of the past. I have not even good recollections—nothing but work, work.'

Speaking thus, she went on modelling fever-

ishly, sometimes with the boasting-tool, sometimes with her fingers, which she wiped every now and then on a little sponge, placed on the wooden stand which supported the group, so that her complaints, her sadness, inexplicable in the mouth of a girl of twenty, which had, when at rest, the purity of a Grecian smile, seemed uttered at random, and not to be addressed to any one in particular. For all that, it made Jenkins uneasy, somewhat confused, in spite of the evident attention which he gave to the artist's work, or rather to the artist herself, to the triumphant gracefulness of that girl, whom her beauty seemed to have predestined to the study of the plastic arts.

Annoyed by that look of admiration which she felt upon her, Felicia resumed:

'*A propos*, I have seen your Nabob; he was shown to me last Friday at the Opera.'

'You were at the Opera last Friday?'

'Yes, the Duke sent me his box.'

Jenkins changed colour.

'I persuaded Constance to accompany me.

She had not been at the Opera for twenty-five years, not since her farewell benefit. She was much affected, especially during the ballet; she trembled with emotion, she was happy; all her former triumphs were sparkling in her eyes. How happy to have such emotions!—A true type, that Nabob! You must bring him to me; I should like to do his head.'

'Him; but he is frightful! You did not see him well.'

'Perfectly well, on the contrary. He sat opposite us. That face of a white Ethiopian would be magnificent in marble. There is nothing commonplace in him. Besides, since he is so ugly, you will not be as unhappy as you were last year, whilst I was making Mora's bust. What a wicked face you had then, Jenkins!'

'I would not,' murmured Jenkins, in a hollow voice, 'go over that time for ten years of my life—but it amuses you to see others suffer.'

'You know very well that nothing amuses

me,' said she, shrugging her shoulders with supreme impertinence.

Then, without looking at him, without adding another word, she sank into one of those mute fits of activity, by which true artists forget their own thoughts and all that surrounds them.

Jenkins made a few steps in the studio, very much moved, his lips trembling with words that he dared not utter. He commenced two or three sentences which found no response. At last, feeling that he was not wanted, he took up his hat, and walked towards the door.

'Well, then, it is understood, I must bring him to you.'

'Bring whom?'

'Why, the Nabob. Did you not this very moment——'

'Ah! yes,' said the strange girl, whose caprices never lasted long, 'bring him if you like. I don't care much.'

And her beautiful mournful voice, with a sound of something broken in it, the helpless dejection of all her person, said enough that it was all true, that she had no interest in the world.

Jenkins left her very much troubled and with lowering brows. But as soon as he was outside, he resumed his smiling and good-natured countenance; for he was one of those who wear a mask in the streets.

The morning was far gone. The mist, yet visible on the banks of the Seine, was only seen floating in patches, and gave an airy lightness to the houses on the quay, to the boats whose paddles could not be seen, to the distant horizon, where the dome of the Invalides hovered like a golden balloon in a net of sunbeams. The spreading warmth, the bustle of the quarter, announced that twelve would soon strike from all the steeples.

Before going to the Nabob, Jenkins had yet to make another visit which appeared to annoy

him much. But he had promised it, and so said with a resolute voice, on getting into his carriage, '68 Rue St. Ferdinand aux Ternes.' The scandalised coachman required the address to be twice repeated; the very horse showed some hesitation; as if the valuable beast, and the servant in his spotless livery, revolted at the idea of a ride in such a distant faubourg, outside the narrow but brilliant circle within which dwelt their master's patients. They soon arrived without impediment at the end of a provincial-looking, unfinished street, and they reached the last house, a building with five stories, which seemed to have been sent forward by the street itself to spy the land and ascertain whether it could advance in that direction. For that house was isolated in the midst of building-plots, and the plots themselves, while awaiting other constructions, were filled with rubbish, with cut stones, old shutters, and mouldering planks, from which old iron gear hung loose. It was like an immense charnel-house of a demolished quarter.

Innumerable bills were hanging over the door adorned by a large dusty case of photographs, near which Jenkins stood one moment motionless. Had the illustrious Doctor come such a distance to have his portrait taken? You might have thought so, judging from his attention before this case, in which were fifteen or twenty photographs representing the members of the same family in different attitudes and expressions: an old gentleman, his chin buried in a white cravat, a leather portfolio under his arm, surrounded by a bevy of young girls with their hair in plaits or in curls, and with modest ornaments over their black dresses. Sometimes the old gentleman had only sat with two of his daughters, sometimes one of those young and pretty girls stood solitary, her elbow resting on a truncated column, her head bent over a book in a natural and simple attitude. But for all that, it was always the same theme, with variations. The glass case had no other gentleman than he with the white

cravat, and no other female faces than those of his numerous daughters.

'The studio on the fifth floor,' said a line over the frame. Jenkins sighed, measured with a glance the distance which separated the ground from a little balcony up yonder, quite near the clouds; then he made up his mind, and went in. In the passage he met a white cravat and a leather portfolio; this was evidently the gentleman in the frame. He, being asked, said that Monsieur Maranne lived on the fifth floor. 'But,' added he, with an encouraging smile, 'the stories are not high;' whereupon the Irishman began to ascend a new narrow staircase with landings no bigger than a step. Only one door on each floor, and windows which allowed you to see a yard dismally paved, and other staircases perfectly empty—one of those frightful modern houses which penniless contractors build by the dozen, and the great inconvenience of which consists in having such thin partitions that all the

inhabitants are compelled to live together in a sort of phalansterian community. But at this moment the evil was not great; for the fourth and fifth stories were alone occupied, as if the lodgers had fallen hitherto from the sky.

On the fourth floor, a copper plate on a door announced: 'Monsieur Joyeuse, Accountant.' Behind the door the Doctor heard a noise of fresh laughter, of youthful voices and of heedless steps, which accompanied him to the floor above, the photographic studio. Those little establishments, perched in corners, and which seem to have no communications with the outside, are one of the oddities of Paris. You wonder how those people can live who carry on those trades, what far-seeing Providence can send customers to a photographer lodged on the fifth story, at the far end of the Rue St. Ferdinand, or books to keep to the accountant below. As this thought crossed Jenkins's mind, he smiled with pity, then entered straight in, as the inscription, 'Go in,' invited him to do.

Alas! there was no fear of the permission being abused. A tall young man in spectacles was writing at a little table, his legs wrapped up in a travelling rug. He rose hurriedly, and came towards the visitor, whom he did not know at first, as he was short-sighted.

'Good morning, André,' said the Doctor, holding out his honest hand.

'Mr. Jenkins!'

'You see, I am a good fellow, as always.—Your conduct towards us, your obstinacy in living far from your friends, required great reserve on my part; but your mother wept, and here I am.'

As he spoke, he looked at the poor little studio and its bare walls, its scanty furniture, its new photographic apparatus, its little Prussian stove, also quite new, and which had never known a fire; the whole mournfully lighted by the perpendicular light which fell from the glass roof.

The long face of the young man, his thin

beard, the clear colour of his eyes, his high and narrow forehead, his long fair hair thrown back—everything in him caught the eye, in the raw light, and gave him the look of *an Illuminato*. What would also have struck any one, was the determination of that limpid look which stared coldly at Jenkins, and opposed beforehand an invincible resistance to all his reasons, to all his protestations.

But the good Jenkins did not appear to notice it.

'You know, my dear André,' from the day that I married your mother, I looked upon you as my son. It was my intention to leave you my practice, to give you a good start, happy had I seen you follow a career devoted to the good of humanity. Suddenly, without saying why, without calculating the consequences which such a rupture might have in the eyes of the world, you leave us, you abandon your studies, you give up your future career, to rush into I know not what out-of-the-

way life, to take a ridiculous profession, the refuge and pretext of all outcasts.'

'It gives me bread, it enables me to live until——'

'Until what? Until you attain literary renown?' He looked scornfully at the papers scattered about on the table.

'All this is not serious; listen to what I have come to say to you: I offer you an opportunity to get on; I open wide for you a door leading to a glorious future. Bethlehem is founded! The finest of my humanitarian dreams is at last accomplished! We have just bought at Nanterre a splendid villa for our first establishment. I wish to entrust to you, as to another self, the management of that house—a princely residence, the salary of an Under-Secretary, and the satisfaction of being useful to the great human family. Say the word, and I drive you to the Nabob, to the great-hearted man, who bears the expense of our enterprise. Do you accept?'

'No,' said the other, so dryly, that Jenkins lost countenance.

'Just so. I expected this refusal when I came here; but I came, nevertheless. I have chosen for my motto: "Do good and expect no return," and I am faithful to my motto. And so, to the honourable, dignified, fruitful existence which I propose to you, you prefer a grovelling life, leading nowhere, without dignity?'

André answered nothing; his silence spoke for him.

'Consider well; you know the consequences of your decision—a final estrangement. But you always wished it so. Need I tell you,' continued Jenkins, 'that to break with me is also to break with your mother? She and I are but one.'

The young man turned pale, hesitated one second, then said, painfully:

'If my mother wishes to see me, I shall feel very happy; but my resolution to leave

you, to have nothing more in common with you, is irrevocable.'

'At least, you will say why?'

He made a sign which meant No, he would not say why.

This time the Irishman made a real gesture of anger. His whole face assumed a cunning, ferocious expression, which would have much astonished those who knew the upright and loyal Jenkins only; but he took good care not to carry further an explanation which he feared, perhaps, as much as he desired it.

'Farewell,' said he from the door, half turning round, 'and in your distress, never apply to us.'

'Never!' answered his son-in-law, in a firm voice.

Now, when the Doctor had said to Joe: 'Place Vendôme,' the horse, as if he understood that he was driving to the Nabob's, proudly shook his bright curb-chain, and the brougham went off at full speed, transforming each spoke of its wheel into a sun.

To come from such a distance and meet with such a reception, he, a celebrity of the time! To be treated thus, by this Bohemian! Try and do good after that! Jenkins gave vent to his anger in a long monologue of this kind; then, all at once, shaking off his discontent: 'Ah, no matter,' said he; and whatever anxiety was yet left on his brow passed away, quickly, on the footpath of the Place Vendôme. The sun everywhere proclaimed twelve o'clock. Issuing from behind its curtain of mist, luxurious Paris, awake and stirring, was commencing its dizzy day's work. The shop-fronts of the Rue de la Paix shone resplendent.

The mansions of the Place rose in proud lines for the afternoon calls. At the end of the white arcades of the Rue Castiglione, the Tuileries, under a beautiful winter sun, showed their shivering statues rosy with cold, among the bare trees of the quinconces.

CHAPTER II.

A BREAKFAST AT THE PLACE VENDÔME.

Not more than about twenty persons were that morning assembled in the dining-room of the Nabob. This room had but yesterday been furnished by some upholsterer, who had, at the same time, furnished the four rooms *en suite*, seen through an open door, provided the hangings, works of art, chandeliers, the plate on the sideboards, and even the servants. Indeed, this looked quite the home improvised, as soon as he had arrived in Paris, by a gigantic *parvenu*, in haste to enjoy life. Although there was not, around the table, the least scrap of feminine dress, the least bit of light-coloured chiffon to enliven it, the sight was not monotonous—thanks to the disparity, the oddness of

the guests: specimens taken from all classes of society, patterns collected from all races, in France, in Europe, in the whole universe, on all the rounds of the social ladder. First of all the host, a species of giant, tanned, swarthy, as yellow as saffron. His head sunk between his shoulders, his short nose lost in the bloatiness of his face, his frizzling, crimpled hair brushed together like an Astrakan cap on a low and dogged forehead, his shaggy eyebrows over his glaring eyes, gave him the fierce look of a Kalmuck, of a border savage, living on booty and rapine. This fierce ugliness, this physiognomy in which originality had stamped out vulgarity, was happily relieved by the lower part of the face, the fleshy lips on which beamed an adorable smile of goodness, and an expression which would have befitted St. Vincent de Paul. For all that, the low extraction of the man appeared in his voice, the voice of a Rhône boatman, hoarse and husky, with a southern accent, more coarse than harsh, and

in two broad, short hands, with square hairy fingers and hardly any nails, which, placed upon the white table-cloth, spoke of their past with annoying eloquence. Opposite him, on the other side of the table, sat the Marquis of Monpavon; but a Monpavon who in nothing resembled the painted mannikin we have seen before. A magnificent man, not old, with a long, majestic nose, a lordly presence, showing a broad front of spotless linen, which cracked under his continuous effort to keep his chest expanded, and bulged out every time with the noise of a white turkey when he swells his throat, or of a peacock when he spreads out his tail. His name of Monpavon became him well. Belonging to a great and rich family, but ruined by gambling and speculations, the Duc de Mora's friendship had procured him a first-class 'Recette générale.' Unfortunately 'his health had not permitted him to keep this good post.' Well-informed people said that his health had nothing to do with it; and for a

year he had lived in Paris waiting, said he, till 'his health' allowed him to resume his former position. The same well-informed people maintained that he would never resume it, and that even, had it not been for mighty protectors. . . . For all that, he was the most important guest at breakfast; you could see that by the way in which the servants attended on him, and the Nabob consulted him, calling him 'Monsieur le Marquis,' just as at the Comédie Française, less out of deference than through pride, and because of the honour reflected on himself.

Full of contempt for his neighbours, the Marquis spoke little, condescendingly bending forward to those he honoured with his conversation. From time to time he addressed the Nabob over the table with a few words, enigmatic for all the others.

'Saw the Duke yesterday;—spoke much of you respecting that affair. You know,—thing-a-bob;—what's his name?'

'Did he, indeed, speak of me?' And the

good Nabob, quite proud, looked around him with ridiculous motions of his head, or assumed the devout look of a pious woman at prayers.

'His Grace would see you with pleasure get into the—ps, ps, ps—into the—what do you call it?'

'Did he say so?'

'Ask Governor—heard it like me.' The Governor, as he was called, Paganetti by name, was a small, quick, lively man, ever gesticulating, fatiguing to look at, so many divers expressions did his face assume in one minute. He was manager of the *Caisse Territoriale* of Corsica, a tremendous financial undertaking. This was the first time he came into the house, and being brought by Monpavon, he occupied a seat of honour. On the other side of the Nabob sat an old man, buttoned up to the chin in a frock coat without lappels, and with an upright collar, like an Oriental tunic, his face cut up with a thousand little frets, and

wearing a white military-looking moustache. This was Brahim Bey, the most valiant colonel of the Tunis Regency, the aide-de-camp of the former Bey, to whom Jansoulet owed his fortune. The glorious exploits of this warrior were written in wrinkles, in stigmas of debauchery on his distended, drooping lower lip, in his red and burnt eyes, which had lost their lashes. It was such a head as is seen in the prisoner's dock in cases tried with closed doors. The other guests had seated themselves pell-mell, just as they had come, for the house was open to all, and the cloth was laid every morning for thirty people.

There sat also the lessee of the theatre which the Nabob supported with his money, Cardailhac, famous for his wit almost as much as for his numerous failures; a marvellous carver, who prepared his 'mots' as he tore off the limbs of a partridge, and cracked his joke while putting a wing in a plate. He had a brilliant rather than a ready wit, and the new

fashion of serving up the viands cut beforehand, *à la Russe*, was fatal to him, as it deprived him of any pretext for a preparatory silence. It was, therefore, generally said of him that he was going down. A Parisian, a dandy to the end of his nails, he used to boast that there was not an atom of superstition in all his body; and consequently he gave very piquant details on the women of his theatre to Brahim Bey—who listened to him as if he had been perusing a bad book,—and spoke theology with a young priest who sat next to him—the curé of some southern village, thin, with a complexion as sunburnt as his cassock, glowing cheeks, and the pointed, prominent nose of aspiring men—who said to Cardailhac, speaking loudly, with the protecting tone of sacerdotal authority:

'We are much pleased with Monsieur Guizot; he is getting on very well. It is a true conquest for the Church.'

By the side of this divine and his starched band, sat old Schwalbach, the famous picture-

dealer, who sported a beard like a prophet's, partly yellow like an unclean fleece. He wore three mouldy-looking overcoats, and showed that loose and careless way of dressing, which was tolerated in him for the sake of art only, because it was thought good taste to have him at a time when a mania for picture galleries was already stirring millions, and he was the best-placed man for those transactions by which human vanity is flattered. Schwalbach did not speak; he only cast round his enormous eye-glass, which looked very much like a lens, and laughed in his sleeve at the strange neighbours whom he found around this table, quite unique in the world. For was there not, by the side of Monsieur de Monpavon, quite near him in fact, (you should have seen how the curve of his nose formed a still stronger arch as he looked in that direction), Garrigou, the singer, a 'countryman' of Jansoulet, a distinguished ventriloquist, who sang 'Figaro' in the patois of the south, and had not his equal to imitate animals?

A little further sat Cabassu, another 'countryman,' a short, stubby fellow, with a bull's neck, and biceps such as would have delighted Michael Angelo to paint. There was in him something of a Marseillais coiffeur and of an athletic champion who exhibits at fairs; for the man was a shampooer, a pedicure, a manicure, and a bit of a dentist. He put his elbows on the table with the coolness of a quack whom one sees in the morning, and who knows the weaknesses and infirmities of the family. To complete this array of subordinates, who had at least some avowable mode of existence, there sat Bompain, the secretary, steward, and factotum, through whose hands passed all the transactions of the house; and a single glance at that solemnly stupid attitude, that dull look, that Turkish fez awkwardly covering a head like that of a village schoolmaster, sufficed to show the kind of person to whom such enormous interests as those of the Nabob had been entrusted.

Lastly, to fill up the gaps among the figures already sketched, there were also a number of Orientals—Tunisians, Moors, Egyptians, and Levantines;—and, mixed with that exotic element, a number of Parisian bohemians of all classes—ruined gentlemen, suspicious traders, journalists with brains wrenched dry, inventors of strange products, men of the south arrived without a sou in their pockets, all the battered crafts, all the flights of birds, whirling about in the night, which this immense fortune attracted like a lighthouse. The Nabob admitted this motley crowd to his table through kindness, generosity, and weakness, through a great facility of character joined to an absolute ignorance of the world, and because something remained in him of an exile's melancholy, a craving for attachment which, when at Tunis, in his splendid palace of the Bardo, had made him welcome all who came from France, from the little trader exporting 'articles de Paris,' to the famous pianist, going his round, and to the Consul-General.

If you had heard the many accents, the foreign hurried jabbering; if you had looked at the different faces, some ferocious, savage, and vulgar-looking, others over-civilised, withered, flabby, boulevard-looking; if you had noticed the same variety among the servants, some of whom—errand-boys yesterday, with dentists' or bathers' heads—busied themselves about, looking insolent among the shiny Ethiopians, motionless like black-marble stands, you would have found it impossible to say exactly where you were. You would certainly not have believed yourself in the Place Vendôme, in the full-beating heart, in the life-centre of our modern Paris. On the table was seen the same confusion of exotic dishes—saffron or anchovy sauces, spices mixed with Turkish dainties, chickens with fried almonds. Add to that the commonplace look of the room itself, the gilding on the wainscots, the hard tinkling of the new bells: all of which gave an impression of *table d'hôte* in some great hotel at Smyrna

or Calcutta, or of a luxurious dining-saloon on board a Transatlantic steamer, the *Péreire* or the *Sinaï*.

One would have thought that this diversity of guests—I had almost said of passengers—would have made the meal an animated and noisy one. Not so. All ate nervously, silently, slyly observing one another; even those who knew the world best, who seemed most at ease, had in their eyes something unsteady and vague which denoted a constant preoccupation, a feverish anxiety. They spoke, but did not answer; they listened, but never understood a word that was said.

All at once the dining-room door opened.

'Ah, here is Jenkins,' said the Nabob, joyfully. 'Good morning, Doctor. How are you, old boy?'

Jenkins smiled all round, warmly shook hands with the host, and took his place right opposite him, by Monpavon's side, before a plate which a servant brought at once and

without waiting for orders, exactly as at a *table d'hôte*. Jenkins at least contrasted, by his good humour, his jolliness, that talkative and insinuating kindliness which makes the Irish the Gascons of England, with all those anxious and feverish faces. And with what robust appetite, what animation, what tranquil conscience he manœuvred, while speaking, his double row of white teeth!

'Well, Jansoulet; have you read?'

'Read what?'

'What! Don't you know? Have not you seen what the *Messager* says of you this morning?'

Through the deep swarthiness of his cheeks the Nabob blushed like a child, and his eyes shone with pleasure.

'Is that true? Has the *Messager* spoken of me?'

'Two whole columns. Did not Moëssard show it you?'

'Oh!' said Moëssard modestly, 'it was not worth while.'

Moëssard was a little journalist, fair and chubby, and rather nice-looking; but his face had that faded look peculiar to comedians and waiters in night-restaurants, a look made up of conventional grimaces and glaring gaslight. He passed for being the friend of an exiled and very light queen. This being whispered around him, gave him, in his society, an envied and contemptible place.

Jansoulet wished to read the article there and then, impatient to know what was said of him. Unfortunately Jenkins had left his paper at the Duke's.

'Fetch me a *Messager*—quick,' said the Nabob to the servant behind him.

Moëssard stopped him:

'It is useless; I have the thing about me.'

And with the careless air of a frequenter of *estaminets*, or of a reporter who scribbles his news with his glass of beer before him, the journalist pulled out a pocket-book cram-full of notes, stamped papers, newspaper cuttings,

and scented notes with monograms, which he spread over the table, searching for the proof of his article.

'Here it is.'

He was handing it to Jansoulet, but Jenkins stopped him.

'Not so; read aloud.'

The whole assembly backing the request, Moëssard took back his proof, and commenced reading aloud:

'*Bethlehem et Monsieur Jansoulet.*' It was a long dithyramb in favour of artificial suckling, written from Jenkins's notes, as was evident from certain bombastic phrases which the Irishman was fond of using, such as—'the long martyrology of childhood,' 'the mercenariness of the breast,' 'the beneficent nursing goat;' and ending, after a pompous description of the splendid Nanterre establishment, with the praise of Jenkins and the glorification of Jansoulet: 'Oh, Bernard Jansoulet, childhood's benefactor,' &c.

You should have seen the vexed and scan-

dalised looks of the guests. What a schemer, that fellow Moëssard! what impudent blarney! And the same envious scornful smile distorted all the mouths and made them awry. The worst was that they were forced to praise, to appear delighted, the host's nostrils not being *blasé* in the matter of incense. Jansoulet enjoyed both the article and the applause it provoked. His broad face was beaming during the reading. How often, when living far away, had he dreamt of being thus praised by the Paris papers, of becoming somebody in that society, the first of all, on which all eyes are attached as upon a luminary! And now that dream was becoming a reality! He looked at those people sitting at his own table, at the sumptuous remnants of the breakfast, at this dining-room at least as high as the church of his village; he listened to the rumbling noise of Paris rolling and stamping under his windows, with the inward feeling that he was becoming one of the big wheels of that

active and complicated machine. There he sat, with the comfortable feeling arising from repletion; and whilst the article was being read he saw, between the lines of that triumphant pæan, the panorama of his past existence pass before his mind's eye—his needy childhood, his adventurous and gloomy youth, days without bread, nights without shelter. Then, all at once, when the reading stopped, amidst an overflow of joy—one of those southern effusions which compel one to think aloud—he cried out, turning on his guests his frank and fleshy smile:

'Ah, dear friends! dear friends! if you could only know how happy I am, what pride I feel!'

The Nabob had only arrived in Paris six months before. With the exception of two or three countrymen of his, those he called his friends were mere acquaintances of yesterday, to whom he had lent money. Therefore this sudden gush appeared to them rather

extraordinary; but Jansoulet, too much moved to notice anything, continued:

'After what I have just heard, when I see myself in this big Paris, surrounded by all the illustrious names, all the great wits, and then recollect my father's stall!—for I was born in a stall:—my father used to sell old nails at the corner of a street of Bourg-Saint-Audéol. There was hardly bread enough every day; and we had stew on Sunday only. Ask Cabassu. He knew me then, and can tell you if I lie. Yes, I have known what misery was.'—He raised his head proudly and sniffed at the fume of the truffles mixed with the air of the close room.—'Yes, I have known misery, true misery. I have starved of cold, of hunger—you know that terrible hunger which makes you drunk, wrings your stomach, makes you dizzy, and blinds you as if your eyes were scooped out with an oyster-knife. I have stayed whole days in bed for want of a coat to go out in; happy when I had a bed, which was not always the case. To earn

my bread I became Jack-of-all-trades; and the bread I ate was so hard to get, so black when gotten, so leathery, that I still feel the bitter and mildewed taste in my mouth. And this till I was thirty! Yes, dear friends, at thirty—and I am not yet fifty—I was still a beggar, without a sou, without prospects, tortured with the idea of the poor widowed mother who was hungering far away in her stall, and whom I could not help.'

It was a curious sight to watch the countenances of those people who surrounded the host as he related the story of his hard days. Some looked quite shocked, Monpavon chiefly. That exhibition of rags seemed to him of extremely bad taste, an absolute want of '*tenue*.' Cardailhac, the delicate sceptic, a foe to sentimentality, wore a stony countenance like that of a sleep-walker, and kept cutting fruit at the end of his fork into slices as thin as cigarette papers. As for the Governor, his attitude bespoke abject admiration. His ex-

clamations expressed in turn stupor and pity. And close by, by way of contrast, Brahim Bey, the warrior, in whom the newspaper article, followed by a speech after a copious meal, had induced a repairing sleep, snored on with his mouth open, behind his white moustache, almost stifled by his gorget, which kept coming up and threatened him with apoplexy. But the most general expression was one of weariness and indifference. What did they care, let me ask you, about Jansoulet's childhood at Bourg-Saint-Audéol, and what he had suffered, and how he had tramped? They had not come here to listen to such stuff! And so an assumed expression of interest, looks which counted the ovolos on the ceilings or the crumbs of bread on the table-cloth, lips tightened to withhold a yawn, were so many signs which betrayed the general impatience caused by the unseasonable story. But he did not feel tired. He liked to tell the story of his past sufferings, just as a mariner, who is at last resting under a safe

shelter, delights in the remembrance of his distant voyages, his dangers and shipwrecks. Then came the story of his luck, the prodigious chance which had set him all at once on the road which leads to fortune.

'I was loafing about in the port of Marseilles,' said he, 'with a comrade as poor as myself, who has also since then become rich with the Bey, and who, after having been my companion, my partner, has become my most cruel enemy. By Jove! I may just as well tell you his name; he is well enough known—Hemerlingue! Yes, gentlemen, the head of the great banking firm "Hemerlingue and Son" had not in those days wherewith to buy a pennyworth of *clauvisses* on the quay. Excited by the roaming aroma which is in the air of seaports, the thought struck us to go in quest of a living in some sunny clime, since the country of fogs was so hard to us. But where should we go? We did as sailors sometimes do to find in what house they shall spend their

money. They stick a bit of paper on the brim of a hat, and turn the hat round on the end of a stick; when it stops the paper shows where to go to. For us the paper index pointed to Tunis. A week after, I landed at Tunis with half a louis in my pocket, and to-day I come back with twenty-five millions!'

There went like an electric shock round the table, and a spark flashed from all the eyes, even from those of the servants. Cardailhac exclaimed '*Mazette!*' The curve of Monpavon's nose unbent a little.

'Yes, my friends, twenty-five millions in cash, without counting all I left behind at Tunis—my two palaces at the Bardo, my ships in the port of Goletta, my diamonds, my precious stones, which are at least worth double! And you know,' he added with his good-natured smile, 'when all is spent, there is still more left.'

The whole table sprang up galvanised.

'Bravo! Oh, bravo!'

'Splendid!'

'Well done you!'

'Well spoken, that!'

'Such a man should be in the Chamber.'

'And so he shall, per Bacco! I answer for it,' said the Governor, with a ringing voice; and in a transport of admiration, not knowing how to express his enthusiasm, he seized the hairy hand of the Nabob and carried it to his lips, without thinking what he was doing, of course. They are impulsive in the south, you know.

They were all on their feet, and did not again resume their seats.

Jansoulet, triumphant, had risen in his turn, and thrown away his napkin:

'Let us go and take coffee,' said he.

Immediately a joyous tumult spread all over the reception rooms—vast apartments which received their light, their ornaments, and their magnificence from gold alone. Gold fell from the ceiling like dazzling rays, it trickled down from the walls in fillets, oozed

out in bars, and formed all sorts of figures. You could not touch a piece of furniture, open a window, but some gold stuck to your fingers; the very hangings were steeped in this Pactolus, and preserved in the stiffness of their folds a metallic sheen. But nothing personal nothing that appealed to the feelings or the understanding, nothing but the uniform splendour of a hired apartment! And what strengthened the impression, at first conveyed, of a temporary arrangement, was the associated idea of voyages hovering like a menace over that fortune which had such distant origins.

When the coffee had been served up in the Eastern fashion, with all the grounds, in small silver-filigrane cups, the guests took their places all round, hurriedly drinking, burning themselves, observing each other, above all watching the Nabob and a favourable opportunity to pounce upon him, and carry him bodily into a corner of those immense rooms, there to negotiate their little loans.

That is what they had been waiting for these two hours—that was the object of their visit—that was the fixed idea which gave them, during the breakfast, that scared and falsely attentive look. But here, no more constraint, no more grimaces. It was known in that strange world that in the middle of his busy life the Nabob had only the coffee hour left free for confidential audiences, and all wished to take advantage of it, since all had come to get a handful of that golden fleece which offered itself to them with so much good nature. They ceased to talk, ceased to listen, each absorbed by his own particular business.

It is our kind friend Jenkins who begins. He takes his friend Jansoulet to a window-recess, and displays before him the plans of the Nanterre House. An important acquisition, this! One hundred thousand francs for the purchase of the premises, considerable expenses incurred in moving in, the staff, the bedding, the goats, the mana-

ger's carriage, omnibuses to meet the trains and bring the children home;—all this takes money. But how well the dear little things will be here! And what a service rendered to Paris, to humanity! Government cannot fail to recompense such disinterested zeal, such philanthropic devotion, with a bit of red ribbon—'The Cross of Honour—the 15th of August.' With these magic words, Jenkins shall have all he wants. With his joyous and husky voice, which always sounds as if he were hailing a boat in the fog, the Nabob calls: 'Bompain!' The man with the fez tears himself away from the liqueurs, crosses the room with great dignity, whispers something, goes away, and comes back bringing an inkstand and a cheque-book, with leaves which seem to detach themselves and fly away quite naturally. It is a glorious thing to be rich! It costs Jansoulet no more to sign a cheque for two hundred thousand francs upon his knee than to pull a louis out of his pocket.

Raging, their noses in their cups, the others

watch this little scene from afar. Then, when Jenkins leaves, light, smiling, bidding adieu to the various groups with a wave of his hand, Monpavon grasps the Governor: 'Now our turn.' And the two make a rush at the Nabob, drag him away to an ottoman, set him down there violently, press him between them with a little fierce laugh which seems to signify: 'What shall we do to him, eh?' Get as much money as possible out of him, of course. Plenty is required to float a second time the *Caisse Territoriale*, stranded for years to the top of its masts. A magnificent operation this second floating, if we are to believe these two gentlemen; for the submerged *Caisse* is full of bullion, of precious materials, of the thousand varied products of a new country about which everybody speaks, and which nobody knows. When he started this matchless concern, Paganetti's object was to monopolise all the products of Corsica: iron mines, sulphur mines, copper mines, marble quarries, coral

fisheries, oyster-banks, chalybeate and sulphurous springs, immense forests of thuyas and royal-oaks; and to facilitate these operations, he intended to construct a net of railways all through the island, and to open a line of steamboats. Such was the gigantic work to which he had devoted himself. Considerable capital had already been sunk in it, and it is the newcomer, the worker of the eleventh hour, who shall gather up all the profits.

Whilst, with his Italian accent and extravagant gestures, the Corsican enumerates the advantages of the affair, Monpavon, haughty and dignified, nods approval with an air of conviction; and every now and then, at the fitting moment, he drops the Duke de Mora's name, which has always a telling effect upon the Nabob.

'Well, how much would it require?'

'Millions!' says Monpavon proudly, in the tone of a man who is not embarrassed to find them elsewhere. 'Yes, millions. But what a magnificent affair! And, as his Grace said, a

capitalist may secure here a great position, a sort of political status. Think of it! a country without money.—You may become Councillor-General, *Député* even.' The Nabob starts. And little Paganetti, who feels the fish nibbling at the bait, says:

'Yes, you can be a *député* if I choose. A sign from me, and the whole of Corsica is at your service.' Then he launches out into a stirring improvisation, counts the votes on which he can rely, the districts that will rise at his call:

'You bring me your capital and I give you a whole people!'

The thing is settled.—'Bompain! Bompain!' calls out the Nabob, kindling with enthusiasm. His only fear is lest the thing should slip out of his fingers; and to secure Paganetti, who has not concealed his need of the ready, he hastens to pay a first instalment to the *Caisse Territoriale.* Once more the man with the red fez makes his appearance with a

cheque-book, which he hugs gravely to his bosom, like an acolyte carrying the Gospel to the other side of the altar. Again Jansoulet signs his name on one of the leaves, which the Governor pockets with a careless air, but which works on his person a sudden transfiguration. Paganetti, so humble, so obsequious just now, leaves the room with the assurance of a man poised with four hundred thousand francs; and Monpavon, with a look still more dignified than usual, follows in his wake and watches over him with more than paternal solicitude.

'A good stroke of business over!' says the Nabob to himself; 'now I shall be able to take my coffee.' But ten sharks are waiting to pounce upon him as he passes. The quickest, most clever, is Cardailhac, the lessee, who snaps him up and carries him away into a remote *salon:*

'Let us have a little chat together, my dear fellow. Let me explain to you the position of our theatre.'

Very complicated the position, no doubt; for behold again Monsieur Bompain, who comes forward, and leaves of the blue paper which fly away! Whose turn now? The journalist Moëssard's. He comes to be paid for his article in the *Messager*. The Nabob shall learn what it costs to be called 'Childhood's Benefactor' in the morning papers. Then comes the provincial Curé, who requires funds to rebuild his church, and takes the cheques by storm with the rapacity of a Peter the Hermit. Then comes old Schwalbach's turn. He approaches, his nose in his beard, with a mysterious wink. He has found a pearl for the Nabob's gallery, a Hobbema which comes from the Duke de Mora's gallery. There are several parties after it, and it will be hard to get.

'I must have it at any price,' says the Nabob, dazzled by the name of Mora. 'Do you hear, Schwalbach? I must have that *Nobbema*. Twenty thousand francs for you if you get it for me.'

'I shall do my best, Monsieur Jansoulet;' and the old rogue calculates, as he leaves the room, that the twenty thousand francs of the Nabob added to the ten thousand promised him by the Duke if he rids him of his picture, will give him a nice profit. Whilst the fortunate ones are thus comforted others keep watch all round, mad with impatience, gnawing their nails to the very bone; for did they not all come with the same purpose? From the kind Jenkins who opened the march, down to the shampooer Cabassu who closes it, all bring back the Nabob into the remote *salon*. But, however far they may take him in the suite of reception rooms, there is ever an indiscreet mirror to reflect the figure of the host and the expression of his broad back. That back is most eloquent! Now it rises indignant, clearly meaning, 'No, no; this is too much!' Now it sinks with comical resignation and plainly conveys: 'If I must, why then I must'—and ever and anon, Bompain's fez in some corner of the landscape!

When all these have done, more still arrive; it is the small fry coming in the track of the big fishes in the ferocious hunts of the rivers.

There is a continual going and coming through those beautiful white-and-gold saloons, a noise of opening and shutting doors, a current of shameless and vulgar spongers, drawn from the four corners of Paris and its suburbs by that gigantic fortune and that incredible weakness. To meet this permanent distribution of small sums, there was no need of the chéque-book. The Nabob kept for this purpose in one of his rooms a mahogany chest of drawers, a shabby piece of furniture, the first bought by Jansoulet with his savings, as soon as he had been able to give up his furnished room, and which he had preserved ever since as a gambler's fetich. Its three drawers always contained two hundred thousand francs in cash. It is to this constant source he had recourse on days of open audience, stirring with a certain

ostentation, and with open brutal hands, his gold, his silver, thrusting it to the bottom of his pockets and pulling it out again with a motion befitting a cattle-dealer, raising the lappet of his frock-coat with a particularly vulgar air, and plunging his hand 'to the bottom and in the heap.' On this day, the drawers of the chest must have suffered a terrible breach.

After so many mysterious whispers, so many requests more or less clearly made, so many humble entrances and triumphant exits, the last client being dismissed, the drawers locked, the apartment in the Place Vendôme was getting empty in the doubtful light of four o'clock, that end of November days which the gas prolongs afterwards so far into the night. The servants were taking away the coffee, the *raki*, the open boxes of cigars, only half empty. The Nabob, believing himself alone, heaved a sigh of relief—'Ough! it is over at last.' Not so. Opposite him somebody leaves an obscure corner and approaches with a letter in his hand.

'Again!'

And immediately, mechanically, the poor man made his eloquent gesture of a cattle-dealer. Instinctively, also, the visitor shrank back so quickly, with such an offended look, that the Nabob understood that he was mistaken. He therefore examined the young man who stood before him, simply but neatly dressed, with a pale complexion, without the least shadow of a beard, with regular features, too serious, perhaps, and too pinched for his age, and which, with his sandy hair, in little curls, like a powdered wig, gave him the look of a Deputy of the Third Estate under Louis XVI.—Barnave's head at twenty. Although the Nabob saw this face for the first time, it was not altogether unknown to him.

'What do you want, sir?'

He took the letter which the young man presented to him, and walked to a window to read it.

'Hallo, it is from Mamma!'

He looked so happy as he said that, that word 'Mamma' lit up all his face with a smile so youthful and so kind, that the visitor, who had been repelled at first by the vulgar aspect of that parvenu, felt full of sympathy for him. The Nabob read half aloud these few lines, written in a round, shaky hand, full of grammatical errors, which contrasted with the cream-laid paper, which had for heading, 'Château de St. Romans:'

'My dear Son,—This letter will be handed to you by the eldest son of M. de Géry, the former Juge de Paix of Bourg-Saint-Audéol, who was so kind to us——'

The Nabob interrupted himself:

'I ought to have known you, M. de Géry. —You resemble your father. Pray sit down.'

He finished the letter. His mother did not ask him anything in particular; but in the name of the services rendered them

formerly by the De Géry family, she recommended Monsieur Paul to him. He had lost his father, and had charge of his two younger brothers. He had been called to the bar, in the south, and had come to Paris to seek his fortune. She begged of Jansoulet to help him, 'for he needed it much, poor fellow;' and she ended with 'Your mother, who longs to see you,'

'FRANÇOISE.'

This letter of his mother, whom he had not seen for six years, these southern expressions through which he recognised a well-known accent, this round handwriting which conjured up before his mind's eye a loved face, full of wrinkles, sunburnt and chapped, but laughing under a peasant's cap, had moved the Nabob.

During the six weeks he had been in France, lost in the vortex of Paris, the worry which always accompanies a change, he had

not had time to think of his dear old mother; and now he saw her again in these lines, as he kept looking at the letter which trembled between his great fingers.

Then, this emotion over:

'Monsieur de Géry,' said he, 'I am glad an opportunity is offered me to return a little kindness for that which your family has shown mine. From this day, if you consent to my proposal, I take you with me. With your education and intelligence, you will be able to render me great services. I have a thousand plans, a thousand affairs. People here have engaged me in a crowd of commercial enterprises. I want some one to help me, to take my place if need be. I have a secretary, a steward, Bompain; but the unfortunate man knows nothing of Paris; he is as one bewildered since he came here. You will tell me that you also are fresh from your province? But that is a very different thing. Well brought up as you have been, a *Méri-*

dional, smart and supple, you will soon get used to the Boulevards. Besides, trust me to make your education, so far as that is concerned. In a few weeks you will have, I assure you, as sure a footing on the Parisian Macadam as I.'

Poor man! It was truly moving to hear him speak of his Parisian footing and experience, he who was ever to be the merest tyro in Paris.

'This is settled, then; is it not? I engage you as my secretary; we shall fix your salary presently, and I shall give you an opportunity of making a large fortune.'

De Géry, a new comer, a beginner, a petitioner, had entered this apartment with a heart full of anxiety; and now, suddenly freed from all fears, he did not dare to stir, lest his beautiful dream should vanish.

'Now,' said the Nabob to him softly, 'sit down there, and let us talk a little of Mamma.'

CHAPTER III.

MEMOIRS OF AN OFFICE-PORTER.—A GLANCE AT THE 'CAISSE TERRITORIALE.'

I HAD just finished my humble breakfast, and put by, as is my custom, the remains of my provisions into the strong box of the board-room—a magnificent chest, with a patent safety lock, which, for the last four years that I have been at the *Caisse Territoriale*, I have used as my provision-safe—when, suddenly, the Governor walks in red with excitement, his eyes glaring as those of a man who had dined too well, and he addresses me in coarse terms, with his Italian accent, thus:

'It stinks here, *Moussiou* Passajon.'

It did *not* stink. Only, shall I tell you? I had just browned some onions to put round

a knuckle of veal, brought to me by Mdlle. Séraphine, the cook of the second floor, whose expenses I write down every evening. I tried to explain the thing to the Governor, but he got into a terrible rage, saying that there was no sense in poisoning the office in that way, and that when a man paid a rent of twelve thousand francs for an apartment with eight windows looking full into the Boulevard Malesherbes, it was for something else than having onions singed in it. I don't know what else he told me in his anger. Naturally I was vexed to be spoken to in that insolent tone of voice. If you don't pay your men, at least be polite to them, by George! Then, I answered him that it was indeed unfortunate, but that if the *Caisse Territoriale* kindly settled my account, and paid me four years' arrears which it owed me, plus seven thousand francs personally advanced by me to the Governor for carriages, newspapers, cigars, and American grogs on board days, I should

quietly go, and eat at the next cook-shop, and should not be reduced to the necessity of cooking in the board-room a wretched stew due to the public commiseration of female cooks. Catch that!

If, in speaking thus, I yielded to a feeling of indignation, I am sure that any person whatever, knowing my position here, would excuse me. After all, I had said nothing improper; and I had strictly remained within the bounds of what a man of my age and education can allow himself. (I think that I must have recorded somewhere in these memoirs that I am sixty-five years old, and that I have held for thirty years the post of beadle at the Faculty of Letters of Dijon. Hence my taste for reports and memoirs and those notions of academic style of which many a place in this writing will show the trace.) I had spoken to the Governor with the greatest reserve, not using any of those insulting terms with which everybody assails him here, from

our two auditors—Monsieur de Monpavon who, whenever he comes, calls him, laughingly, 'Flower of Mazas,'[1] and Monsieur de Bois-Landry, of the Trumpeters' Club, as coarse as a groom, who always bids him good-bye with a 'To your bed, you bug!'—down to our cashier, whom I have heard a hundred times tell him, striking his ledger meanwhile, 'That there is enough in that book to transport him whenever he likes.' Well, for all that, my simple observation produced an extraordinary effect on him. His eyes became quite yellow, and his voice was trembling with anger—a violent anger, such as they feel in Italy—when he said to me: 'Passajon, you are a blackguard; one word more and I dismiss you.' I remained speechless with astonishment. Dismiss me! Me! And my four years' arrears, and my seven thousand francs' advances! The Governor seemed to read what was passing in my mind, for

[1] Mazas, a penitentiary in Paris.

he added that all accounts, mine included, would be instantly settled. 'Look here,' added he, 'just send those gentlemen into my private office. I have some news for them.' So saying he went in, and slammed the doors behind him.

What a strange man he is! You never can fathom him. You know he is a liar and a comedian; but he always manages to get round you with his blarney. Settle my account—my account! My emotion was so great that, as I went to carry his orders to the staff, my legs were absolutely tottering.

According to regulation we ought to be twelve employés at the *Caisse Territoriale*, including the Governor and the handsome Moëssard, the editor of the *Vérité Financière*; but the greater part never come. First of all, ever since the *Vérité* has ceased to appear—more than two years—Monsieur Moëssard has not put his foot in our office. It would appear that honours are showered upon him—that he

has become rich—that he has a queen for his sweetheart, a true queen, who gives him as much money as he can spend. Oh Paris! what a Babylon! The others come, from time to time, to inquire if by any chance there is something new at the *Caisse*. But there never is, and so they stay away weeks and weeks. Four or five faithful ones like me persist in coming regularly every morning, by habit, listlessly, not knowing what else to do. Only, every one busies himself about something or other quite foreign to the office. They must live, you know! Besides, one cannot pass a whole day dawdling away the time in an arm-chair, or looking out of the windows—eight front windows opening on the Boulevard. I, for one, keep the books of Mademoiselle Séraphine and of another cook in the house. Then I write my memoirs, which takes a good deal of time. Our collector—he has little enough to do here, I assure you—makes nets for a

fishing-tackle shop. We have two copying clerks: one who has a fine handwriting copies plays for a dramatic agency; the other invents little penny playthings, which hawkers sell in the streets about New Year's Day, and in this way finds means to keep the wolf from the door all the rest of the year. Our cashier is the only one who does not do anything foreign to his duty. He would think himself dishonoured! He is a very proud man, who never utters a word of complaint, and whose only fear is to appear to want linen. He locks himself into his office and manufactures from morning to night paper shirt-fronts, collars and cuffs. He has acquired such skill at that, that his spotless linen quite deceives you, except that at the least motion he makes in walking it cracks, as if he had a pasteboard box in his stomach. Unfortunately all this paper does not nourish him, and he looks so thin and miserable that you wonder how ever he manages to live. Between us, I

suspect him of sometimes paying private visits to my pantry, an easy thing for him to do, as, being the cashier, he knows the word which opens the lock; and it is my candid opinion that when my back is turned he forages a little among my provisions.

This is an extraordinary, an incredible banking-house; and yet it is the pure truth I relate, and Paris is full of financial firms of the same kind. Oh! if ever I publish my memoirs. . . . . But let me return to my story.

When the Governor saw us all assembled in his room, he solemnly addressed us, thus:

'Gentlemen, and dear comrades, the time of trials is over. The *Caisse Territoriale* is beginning a new era. . . . .' And he began to talk about a splendid *combinazione*—a favourite word of his which he uses in a most insinuating way—a *combinazione* which that famous Nabob, of whom the papers speak so much, was about to join. The *Caisse Territoriale* was therefore in a position to settle with its faithful servants,

reward devotedness, and get rid of useless hands.—This for me, I suppose.—In short: 'Make up your accounts; they shall all be paid to-morrow.' Unfortunately, he has so often deceived us with lying promises that the point of his speech was not felt. Formerly, those fine promises always took. When a new *combinazione* was announced, we used to jump; we wept for joy in the office; we embraced one another like shipwrecked mariners when they catch sight of a sail.

On those occasions we would prepare our accounts for the next day, as we were bid. But the next day, no Governor; the day after, still nobody. He was away on a little journey.

At last, when we were all there, exasperated, our mouths watering, mad, the Governor would arrive, drop into an arm-chair, his head in his hands, and before any of us had time to say a word: 'Kill me,' he would say, 'kill me! I am a miserable impostor. The *combinazione* is a failure. *Pechero?* Ah, the *combina-*

zione!' And he would cry, sob, fall on his knees, tear out his hair by the handful, roll himself on the carpet, calling us by our Christian names, begging us to deliver him of life, speaking of his wife, of his children whom he had ruined. And no one of us had the heart to upbraid at the sight of such despair. Nay, more, we became as much moved as he. No, I tell you, since there are theatres, there never was seen such a comedian as he; but now that we know him, our confidence is gone. When he left us this morning we all shrugged our shoulders, and yet I must confess that at one time I was shaken. His confidence, when he spoke of settling my account, and the name of the Nabob . . . . that man is so rich!

'You believe that, do you?' said the cashier to me. 'Don't be so credulous, my poor Passajon. You need not make yourself uneasy. It will be with the Nabob as with Moëssard's queen.'

And, so saying, he went back to his shirt-fronts.

What he said about Moëssard and his queen referred to the time when Moëssard used to pay his court to his queen, and when he had promised the Governor that, in case of success, he would engage Her Majesty to invest in our concern. In the office we all knew about this thing, and, as you may well imagine, felt greatly interested in its progress, since our money depended on its success. We were kept in wind two whole months with that story. We were excited; we used to watch Moëssard's face, and found that the lady was very long making up her mind. And our old cashier, with his proud and serious look, whenever anyone questioned him on this point, used to answer gravely, 'Nothing new,' or 'The affair is progressing.' Then we were all pleased, and used to say to one another: 'It is getting on—getting on,' just as if we had been talking of an ordinary stroke of business. It is only in Paris such things are seen. Positively, to think of it makes me dizzy sometimes. To sum up, Moëssard, one fine morning, ceased

to come to the office. He had been successful, it seems; but the *Caisse Territoriale* had not appeared to him a sufficiently safe investment for his sweetheart's money. Was that honest, tell me?

But you will hardly believe how quickly the sense of honesty can be lost here! When I think that I, Passajon, with my grey hair, my venerable looks, my stainless past—thirty years of academic services—that I have become as thoroughly at home in the midst of those underhand dealings, those infamies, as a fish is in water!—I dare say you will ask me what I am doing here, why I stay, how I came?

How I came? Very simply. Four years ago—my wife being dead, my children married, and my pension settled as beadle of the Faculty—an advertisement appeared which by chance caught my eye: 'Required a porter of a certain age at the *Caisse Territoriale*, 56 Boulevard Malesherbes. Good references required.' Let me here make a confession. The modern

Babylon has always tempted me. Besides, I felt still young, and saw before me ten good years yet, during which I might make a little money, much perhaps, if I invested my savings in the bank where I should enter. I therefore wrote, and sent my photograph—that taken by Crespon of the market-place—in which I am represented with a clean-shaved chin, sparkling eyes under my white bushy eyebrows, a steel chain around my neck, and my ribbon of an *officier d'académie* at my buttonhole; in short, 'quite the look of a conscript-father on his curule-chair,' as Mr. Chalmette, the dean of the Faculty, used to say. He said also that I bore a great resemblance to the late Louis XVIII., but less stout.

I sent in the best references, the most flattering testimonials, from the gentlemen of the Faculty. By return of post the Governor answered me that he liked my face (I should say he did! A face like mine in the hall is a bait for shareholders), and that I might come

when I pleased. You will tell me that I ought to have made inquiries also. No doubt of it. But I was so busy collecting testimonials that it never occurred to me to ask them references about themselves. Besides, how was it possible to suspect anything when you saw how admirably this place is got up: the high ceiling, the iron safes as large as cupboards, the mirrors in which you see yourself down to the knees, the sonorous prospectuses, the millions which I heard pass whizzing in the air, and the colossal undertakings with fabulous profits in which we were engaged? I was dazzled, fascinated. I must also add that the place looked somewhat different then from what it does now. Business was bad, certainly—business is always bad here—the journal appeared most irregularly; but a little *combinazione* of the Governor enabled him to keep up appearances.

He had managed to open a patriotic subscription to raise a statue to General Paolo, Paoli—some such name—a great man of his country. Corsicans are not rich,

but they are as full of vanity as turkey-cocks. Unfortunately, that did not last. At the end of two months the statue was swallowed up before it had been erected, and the protests and summonses began to drop in upon us again. Now I am used to them; but, when I was just fresh from my province, the bills stuck on our door and announcing a sale by decree of the court, the brokers standing outside, always impressed me painfully. In the office they were used to it, and paid no attention to it. They knew that at the last moment Monpavon or Bois-Landry was sure to come and satisfy the bailiffs; for all those gentlemen are deep in our concern, and, of course, are interested in avoiding bankruptcy. That is what saves our cunning Governor. The others throw good money after bad, just like gamblers; they are afraid lest the shares which they hold should cease to have any other value than that of the paper they are printed upon.

From great to small, we are all in for it in

the house. From the landlord, to whom two years' rent is due, and who keeps us for nothing for fear of losing all, down to us poor employés, down to me who am in for my four years' arrears, and seven thousand francs savings, we are all throwing good money after bad. That is why I must stay here.

I might, no doubt, in spite of my age, and thanks to my good looks, my education, and the neatness of my wearing apparel, obtain a good post in another administration. I know a very respectable gentleman, a Monsieur Joyeuse, bookkeeper at Hemerlingue and Son's, the great bankers of the Rue St. Honoré, who never fails to tell me whenever he meets me:

'Passajon, my friend, don't stay in that den of thieves. You will never get a penny back of your money. Come to Hemerlingue's; I shall be able to find some little corner there for you. Your salary will be smaller, but you will touch a good deal more.'

I well know the good gentleman is right,

but for all that I cannot make up my mind to go, though the life I lead here is far from comfortable in those big, cold rooms, where nobody ever comes, where each of us squats in his own corner without exchanging a word with anybody else. It cannot be helped. We know each other too well, and have nothing new to say. Until last year we had meetings of the board, meetings of the shareholders, stormy and noisy meetings those, true battles of savages, whose cries were heard as far as the Madeleine. There came also, several times a week, subscribers, indignant at never receiving news of their money. It was then our Governor was truly beautiful. I have seen people, sir, walk into his room raging like wolves thirsting for carnage, and leave it a quarter of an hour later gentler than lambs, satisfied, reassured, and their pockets lighter by a few bank-notes. That's what I call clever: wrench money from poor wretches who had come here to ask for some! But now the shareholders of the *Caisse*

Territoriale have ceased to stir. They must all be dead, or are resigned to their fate. The board never meets; our meetings take place on paper only, and it is I who write the minutes —always the same—which I copy every three months. We should never see a soul were it not for some stray subscriber to Paoli's statue, who every now and then falls upon us from the centre of Corsica, curious to know whether the monument is getting on; or some benign reader of the *Vérité Financière*—disappeared these last two years, notice—who comes, with a sheepish look, to renew his subscription, and asks, if possible, a little more regularity in the issue. There is a kind of confidence which nothing can shake! When one of those lambs falls in the midst of our famished band, it is a fearful sight! We surround him, we twine ourselves around him, try to get his name upon one of our lists; and if he resists, if he will neither subscribe to Paoli's monument, nor take shares in the Corsican railways, our gentlemen play him what

they call—my pen blushes to write it down—what they call the 'drayman's trick.'

This is what it is: We always keep in the office a parcel ready beforehand, a neatly-corded box, which is supposed to have arrived from the station whilst our visitor is here. 'Twenty francs to pay,' says one of us, bringing in the box,—sometimes it is thirty francs, according to the patient's face. Immediately we all begin to search our pockets. 'Twenty francs! I have not twenty francs about me.' 'Nor have I.' 'What shall we do?' We run to the cash-office. Shut! We look for the cashier. Gone out! The big voice of the drayman getting impatient in the hall, is heard: 'Be quick, if you please.' It is I who am generally the drayman, because of my fine voice. What shall we do? Return the parcel? How vexed the Governor will be! 'Gentlemen, I pray, allow me,' says the spotless victim, opening his purse. 'Ah, sir, I could not allow——.' He gives the twenty francs, we accompany him to the door,

and as soon as his heels are turned, we share among us all the fruit of the crime, laughing like bandits.

'Fie! Monsieur Passajon—a man of your age—do such a trade?' Good God, I know all you can say! I know it would be more honourable to leave this wicked place. But what! must I give up all I have here? No, the thing is not possible: On the contrary, it is absolutely necessary that I should stay, watch, be always present and ready to profit by any windfall, should one happen. But I swear by my thirty years of academical services, by my ribbon, if ever such an affair as that of the Nabob should allow me to recover my money, I will not tarry here one single minute. I shall hurry to Monbars, and cultivate my little vine there, for ever cured of my madness for speculation. But alas! this hope is vain indeed! Known as we are in the Paris market, without credit, and with a tarnished reputation, our shares no longer quoted

at the Exchange, and worth little more than so much paper, we are made up of lies and debts, and the abyss becomes deeper every moment. We owe at this moment three millions five hundred thousand francs; and yet it is not those millions that are most vexatious. On the contrary, they keep us from sinking. But we have a small account due to the house porter, a wretched bill of twenty-five francs for postage-stamps, gas, and items of that sort. And *that* is terrible, let me tell you. Who can believe after that, that any man—let alone a great moneyed man like the Nabob, were he just arrived that very day from Congo, or even from the moon—could be mad enough to invest his money in such a rotten concern as this? Nonsense! It is not possible. We are not so green as we look, dear Governor.

CHAPTER IV.

A DÉBUT IN THE WORLD.

'MONSIEUR BERNARD JANSOULET!'

That plebeian name, proudly emphasised by the liveried servants, shouted by a sonorous voice, resounded in Jenkins's *salons* like a stroke of a cymbal, of a gong, which in pantomimes ushers in fantastic apparitions. The lights grew dim, all eyes flashed flames kindled by the dazzling prospect of Oriental treasures, showers of sequins and pearls, which the magic name shook down.

Yes, it was he, the Nabob, the richest of the rich, the greatest lion in Paris, spiced with that sprinkling of adventures which has so much attraction for men whose sense of wonder is blunted. All heads turned at

once, and all conversations were hushed. There was a rush to the door; men elbowed each other, as they do on a pier in a seaport town to watch the entrance of a galleon loaded with gold.

Jenkins himself, so hospitable, so self-restrained, who stood in the first *salon*, to welcome his guests, left quickly a group of men, and rushed forward to receive the galleon.

'How kind you are! Mrs. Jenkins will be very happy, very proud. Come, let me present you.'

And in his haste, in the joy of satisfied vanity, he led Jansoulet away so quickly, that the latter had no time to introduce to him his companion, Paul de Géry, who was making his *début* in society. The young man was very glad to be thus forgotten. He crept into the mass of black coats which every newcomer thrust back farther, lost himself in it, seized by that vague terror which every young provincial experiences when first entering a

Paris *salon*, chiefly when he is intelligent and refined, and does not wear the imperturbable coolness of boors, like a coat of mail, under his linen.

You all, Parisians of the true type, who have, from the age of sixteen, with your first black coat on, and your opera-hat in your hand, frequented all the worlds,[1] you do not know that anguish, made up of vanity, timidity, recollections of romantic reading, which causes us to clench our teeth, benumbs our limbs, changes us for a whole night into door-posts, pieces of furniture in a window recess,—poor wandering and lamentable beings incapable of manifesting their existence otherwise than by shifting their positions from time to time;—which makes us die of thirst rather than approach a sideboard, and go away, at last, without having uttered a word; except, perhaps, we have stammered

[1] Parisian society, at least such as men may frequent, is divided into many sections: 1st, *Le monde*; 2nd, *Le demi-monde*, and then other fractions of *monde*.

some ridiculous nonsense, which haunts us for months, and makes us, when we think of it at night, utter an exclamation of angry shame, our heads hidden in our pillows.

Paul de Géry was such a martyr. In his province he had lived a retired life, near an old pious and morose aunt, until the time when the law student, destined at first for the profession in which his father was so well remembered, had been invited to the houses of a few court-councillors—old, melancholy dwellings, with faded pier-glasses—where he took a hand at whist with venerable shades. Jenkins's *soirée* was therefore a *début* for this provincial, whom his very ignorance and southern acuteness made at once an observer of what was going on. From the spot where he stood, he assisted at the curious procession, which had not yet terminated at twelve o'clock, of Jenkins's guests —all the patients of the fashionable doctor; the pink of society, many politicians, financiers, bankers, *députés*, a few artists, all the over-

ridden men of Parisian high-life, pale, with shiny eyes, saturated with arsenic like gluttonous mice, but insatiable of poison and life.

Through the open drawing-room, through the immense antechamber, the door of which had been taken down, the eye could see the staircase, laden with flowers on both sides, swept by the long trains of the women, whose heavy silk, as it drew the shoulders backward, brought forward their *décolleté* busts; and in that pretty ascensional motion, these human flowers rose upwards by degrees until the perfect bloom of their beauty stood revealed.

As the couples arrived on the last step, they seemed to enter on a stage; and that illusion was doubly true, for they left behind them all their frowns, all their anxieties, their weary looks, their anger and their surliness, to show a pleased countenance, a smile spread on the harmonious repose of their features. The men warmly shook hands, and greeted each other like brothers. The women, hearing

nothing, solicitous about themselves only, with their elegant mincing, with their quivering gracefulness, the play of their eyes and shoulders, murmured a few words of welcome.

'Thanks! Oh, thanks! How good you are!' Then the couples separated; for evening parties are no longer those meetings of amiable people in which feminine cleverness compelled men to make themselves sociable, to forget their high knowledge, and to humble their genius gracefully before them. They are overcrowded gatherings, in which the women, sitting alone, warbling among themselves, like the slaves of a harem, have no other pleasure than that of feeling beautiful, or of appearing so. De Géry, after having wandered into the Doctor's library, the conservatory, the billiard-room, where some men were smoking, became tired at last of the grave and barren conversation, which appeared to clash in such a beautiful place, at a time devoted to pleasure.—Somebody had asked him carelessly, and without looking at him, the

quotations of the Exchange.—He came nearer to the door of the great drawing-room, which was blocked up by a crowd of men, by a sea of heads bending one towards another; and looking on, he saw an immense apartment, richly furnished in the artistic taste that characterised the master and the mistress of the house:—a few old masters on the clear ground of the draperies; a monumental chimney-piece, decorated with a beautiful marble group, 'Les Saisons,' by Sébastien Ruys, around which long green stalks carved in lacework, or having the goffered stiffness of bronze, bent towards the mirror as if it had been a sheet of pure water; close groups of women on low seats, with the hazy colours of their dresses confusedly mixed, and forming an immense basket of living flowers, above which floated the sheen of their bare shoulders, their coiffures strewn with diamonds which looked like drops of water on the brunette, like sparkling reflections of light on the blonde; the same heady perfume, the same

confused and soft buzz, made of vibrating heat and fluttering wings, such as in summer hangs over a flower garden; now and then a little laugh rising out of that luminous atmosphere, a stronger breath which made aigrettes and ringlets quiver, and caused a pretty face to disclose itself.

Such was the aspect of the *salon*.

A few men were there, very few, all men of mark, laden with years and crosses, talking on the edge of an ottoman, leaning on the backs of their seats, with that look of condescension which is assumed to speak to children. But in the peaceful murmur of those conversations a voice burst forth, sonorous, like the sound of a brass instrument; it was that of the Nabob, who was quietly crossing this assembly of fair women, with the assurance which he received from his immense fortune, and a certain contempt for women brought from the East.

At this moment, spreading his person on a seat, his large hands in yellow gloves crossed

nonchalantly, he was talking to a very handsome girl, whose uncommon countenance—much animation on serious features—contrasted with the surrounding faces, as her white dress with classic folds and moulded on her graceful and supple person contrasted with richer toilettes, none of which, however, fitted so well, or looked so boldly simple.

From his corner De Géry was admiring that small and smooth forehead covered with a fringe of hair, those long, open eyes of deep blue—a fathomless blue—that mouth which only ceased to smile, to relax its pure form in an expression of weariness and fatigue. Altogether, she had the somewhat haughty look of a being classed apart. Some one near him named her —Felicia Ruys. At once he understood the rare attraction of that young girl, the heir of her father's genius, and whose rising celebrity had reached even his province, haloed by a reputation for beauty. Whilst he was contemplating her, admiring her least motions,

somewhat puzzled by the mystery visible in that fair face, he heard a whisper behind him:

'Look! how amiable she looks with the Nabob!'

'If the Duke came——

'Is the Duke coming?'

'Of course he is; the *soirée* is given on his account, that he may meet Jansoulet.'

'And do you think that the Duke and Mdlle. Ruys——'

'Where do you come from? It is a *liaison* which all Paris knows. It began at the last exhibition, for which she made his bust.'

'And the Duchess?'

'Oh! the Duchess, she has had to put up with a good deal of that sort of thing.'

'Ah! Madame Jenkins is going to sing.'

There was a stir in the drawing-room, a stronger crush near the door, and the conversations ceased for one moment. Paul de Géry breathed again. What he had just heard

had saddened him; he felt bespattered, stained by that handful of mud thrown at the ideal which he had conceived of that splendid young girl, matured under the sun of art and gifted with so penetrating a charm. He changed his place—went a little further. He was afraid lest he should hear somebody whisper some other infamy. Madame Jenkins's voice soothed him. Hers was a voice famous in the saloons of Paris; in spite of its brilliancy, it had nothing theatrical, but seemed like the emotion of human speech vibrating with untaught harmony. The songstress, a woman of forty or forty-five, had magnificent sandy hair, refined, soft features, and a great expression of goodness. Beautiful still, she was dressed in the costly taste of a woman who wishes to please. And so she did indeed! A widow, she had ten years before married the Doctor, and they seemed to be still in the honeymoon of their happiness. Whilst she was singing a popular Russian air, wild and soft like a

Slavonian smile, Jenkins appeared naïvely proud, nor did he try to dissemble it, all his broad face beaming. And she! each time she bent her head to take breath, she looked towards him with a timid, loving smile, which reached him above the spreading music. When her song came to an end, amid an admiring and pleased murmur, it was a touching sight to watch how discreetly, how stealthily she pressed her husband's hand, as if she had wished to procure him a shred of happiness in the midst of this great triumph. Young De Géry felt comforted at the sight of this happy couple, when, quite near him, a voice—not the same voice as before—murmured:

'You know what they say — that the Jenkinses are not married?'

'Nonsense!'

'I assure you. It appears that there is somewhere a true Mrs. Jenkins, but not this one. Besides, did you notice——'

The conversation was continued in a whis-

per; Mrs. Jenkins was approaching, bowing, smiling; and the Doctor, taking a glass of claret from a passing tray, offered it to her with the attention of a mother, of an *impresario*, of a lover.—Calumny! calumny! Indelible libel!—But now, the attentions of Jenkins seemed overdone to the provincial. He thought he could see in them a something affected, put on; and when she whispered her thanks to her husband, he fancied that he could notice a submissive fear, ill fitting the dignity of a wife when she is happy and can place reliance on her happiness. 'The world is a hideous thing!' thought De Géry, terrified and feeling his hands cold. All those smiles around him appeared to him so many grimaces. He felt shame and loathing. Then, suddenly, struggling with his own convictions: 'Nonsense!' thought he, 'it cannot be!' But, as if answering that exclamation, slander went on behind him in a free and unconcerned tone:

'After all, you know, I won't be positive.

I only repeat what I was told. Hallo! There is Baroness Hemerlingue. Why, that Jenkins has all Paris here!'

The Baroness was advancing, leaning on the arm of the Doctor, who had hastened forward to receive her; but whatever power he might have possessed over the muscles of his face, Jenkins seemed a little put out and embarrassed. The good Doctor had imagined that his party might be of use to reconcile his friend Hemerlingue with his friend Jansoulet, his two richest clients, who embarrassed him much with their intestine war. The Nabob was quite willing. He bore no malice to his old chum. Their quarrel had arisen out of Hemerlingue's marriage with one of the Bey's favourite women. 'Women's brawls, nothing more!' said Jansoulet. And a reconciliation would have made him happy, for any antipathy was odious to his exuberant nature. But now it appeared that the Baron was averse from forgiveness, for, in spite of the promise he had given

Jenkins, his wife came alone, to the Irishman's great disgust.

The Baroness was a tall, thin, delicate person, with her eyebrows brushed up like a bird's feathers; she looked young and timid, and though thirty years old, she did not seem more than twenty; she wore grasses and drooping ears of corn in her black hair, which was so thickly sprinkled with diamonds, that they seemed to have been thrown there by the handful. With her long lashes, her cheeks with the white even complexion of women long cloistered, and the stiffness with which she wore her Parisian toilet, she resembled a nun who has violated her vow and returned to the world, rather than a woman of the harem. There was something devout and prim in her carriage—a certain priestly way of walking with her eyes cast down, her elbows held tight to her bust, her crossed hands, her manners formed on the pious models in the midst of which she had lived

since her conversion and recent baptism—which made this resemblance more striking still. It is easy to imagine how eagerly worldly curiosity gathered around this former odalisque, now become a fervent Catholic, who was advancing, flanked by the livid face of a spectacled beadle, Maître le Merquier, the Deputy of Lyons, Hemerlingue's agent, who accompanied the Baroness whenever the Baron was 'indisposed,' as this evening for example.

When they entered the second drawing-room, the Nabob went straight up to her, thinking he saw behind her the puffed-out face of his old comrade, with whom it was agreed he should shake hands. On perceiving him the Baroness became paler still. A light as cold as steel flashed from beneath her long lashes, her nostrils opened and throbbed; and as Jansoulet was bowing to her, she brushed past him with a hurried step, her head high and straight, and dropped from her thin lips an Arabic word which

nobody knew, but understood too well by the poor Nabob, whose sunburnt face, as it rose again, had the glow of baked clay just out of the furnace. He remained one moment motionless, speechless, his hands clenched, his lips swollen with rage. Jenkins approached him, and De Géry, who had followed all this scene from afar, saw them talk together with an angry and anxious expression.

This cleverly combined reconciliation was a failure. Hemerlingue was against it. Provided the Duke keeps faith now! It was late already. La Wauters, who had been engaged to sing the air of 'La Nuit' from 'La Flûte Enchantée,' after the opera was over, had just come in, wrapped up in her lace hood.

And still the minister did not come!

Yet the thing had been agreed on, promised. Monpavon was to fetch him at his club. From time to time our good friend

Jenkins pulled out his watch as he uttered an absent 'bravo!' to the sheaf of pearled notes which La Wauters warbled out of her fairy lips—a sheaf of three thousand francs, by the bye, useless, like all the other expenses of the *soirée*, if the Duke failed to come.

All at once the door opened wide.

'His Grace the Duke de Mora!'

A long murmur greeted him. The respectful curiosity which he inspired appeared in the double line through which he passed, instead of the brutal crush which had hailed the Nabob. No man ever knew better than he how to make his appearance in society, how to cross a drawing-room with becoming gravity, to ascend the tribune with a smile, to give a serious appearance to futile things, and to treat lightly matters of the gravest importance. That was the *résumé* of the part he played in life, a sort of paradoxical distinction. Still handsome, in spite of his fifty-six years, his kind of beauty arose from a compound of

elegance and harmony, in which the gracefulness of the dandy received a stamp of manliness from his military bearing and proud countenance. He wore his black coat with wonderful ease, and, to do honour to Jenkins, he had put on a few of his orders, a thing he did not usually do, except on days of official ceremony.

What a terrible life this man led!—Politics, gambling in all its forms—speculation and cards—and that reputation of a conquering Don Juan, which he must needs support at any price! This man was a true patient of Jenkins; and this princely visit was surely Jenkins's due; for was he not the inventor of the mysterious pearls that gave that light to his look, and to all his bearing that sympathetic and extraordinary dash?

'Dear Duke, allow me to——'

Monpavon, with his solemn air, his bulging frill, was trying to go through the expected introduction; but his Grace was absent, he did not hear, and went on towards the great draw-

ing-room, under the influence of one of those electric currents which break the monotony of worldly assemblies. On his passage, whilst he bowed to the fair Madame Jenkins, the women bent forward a little, with inviting looks, a soft laugh, a desire to please. But he saw only one, Felicia, standing in the midst of a group of men, talking as unconcernedly as if she were in her studio, her eyes fixed on the Duke, and quietly taking a sherbet. She was perfectly natural in her manner when he drew near. The *entourage* kept at a discreet distance. And yet, in spite of what De Géry had heard of their assumed relations, there did not seem to exist between them anything more than an intellectual sympathy and a playful familiarity.

'I called at your house, Mademoiselle, on my way to the Bois.'

'So I was told; you even went into my studio!'

'Yes! and saw the famous group; my group.'

'Well, what do you think of it?'

'It is very beautiful. The greyhound runs like mad. The fox is admirably started. But I did not understand very well—did not you say that it was the story of us both?'

'So it is. Try and find out. It is an apologue which I read in—you don't read Rabelais, your Grace?'

'No! he is too coarse.'

'Well, I have learnt to like him. Very wicked of me, you know. I was so badly brought up! Well, my apologue is taken from Rabelais. Here it is. Bacchus has made a marvellous fox which can't be caught running. On the other hand, Vulcain has given to a dog of his own the power of catching any beast he pursues. Now, as my author says, 'they happened to meet somewhere.' You see the mad, the unendable race. It seems to me, your Grace, that fate has brought us thus face to face, endowed with contrary qualities. You have

received from the gods the gift of winning all hearts; but my heart shall never be won!'

She said that to him, looking at him full in the face, almost laughing, upright and tight in her white tunique, which seemed to defend her person against the liberties of her intellect. As for him, the irresistible conqueror, he had never before met a woman of this bold and wilful mood. Therefore he enveloped her in all the magnetic effluvia of his winning grace, whilst around them, the increasing murmur of the *fête*, the soft laugh, the rustling of satin dresses and fringes of pearls, played the accompaniment to that duet of worldly passion and juvenile irony. He resumed, after a minute's silence:

'But how did the gods extricate themselves from this puzzle?'

'By changing the two racers into stone.'

'For my part,' said he, 'I do not accept this catastrophe. I defy the gods to ever petrify my heart.'

A jet of flame shot from his eyes, but he extinguished it as he thought they were watched.

And they were watched indeed, but by no one with so much curiosity as by Jenkins, who hovered around them, full of impatience, his nerves irritated, as if he had been angry with Felicia for monopolising the important personage of the night.

The young girl called, laughingly, the Duke's attention to the fact:

'They will say that I monopolise you.' And she showed him Monpavon, who was waiting near the Nabob. The latter turned towards his Grace the fawning and submissive look of a big dog. His Grace remembered then what had brought him there. He bowed to the young girl and came back to Monpavon, who presented to him, at last, 'his honourable friend Monsieur Bernard Jansoulet.' The Duke bowed, the parvenu humbled himself to the ground; then they talked together a little,—a curious group to observe: Jansoulet, tall, strongly built, vulgar-

looking, his skin tanned, his broad back arched as if it had become unalterably round in the *salam aleks* of Oriental fawning, his big short hands bursting through his light gloves, his loud gestures, his southern gush of expressions finding vent in rough, fast-flowing words;—the other, a gentleman of the bluest blood, worldly, the personification of elegance, graceful in his least movements, but still sparing of them, dropping with nonchalance unfinished phrases, lighting with a half-smile the gravity of his countenance, hiding under his imperturbable politeness the thorough contempt which he entertained for men and women. That very contempt gave him his power. In an American *salon* the contrast would have shocked less, the millions of the Nabob would have restored the equilibrium, and even turned the scale in his favour. But Paris has not yet come to that, that it puts money above all other powers. You might have understood that, at the sight of this big financier, wriggling with an amiable smirk before that

grand seigneür, throwing under his feet, like the ermine cloak of the courtier, his coarse pride of a parvenu. From the corner where he had ensconced himself, de Géry was looking on with interest, knowing the importance his friend attached to that presentation, when chance, which had all the evening given such cruel lessons to his untaught innocence, brought to his ear the following short dialogue, carried on quite near him, and caught above the buzz of private conversations in which we always hear exactly what concerns us:

'It was the least Monpavon could do, to make him form a few good connexions, considering that he procured him such bad ones. You know that he has saddled him with Paganetti and all his band?'

'Poor fellow! they will devour him.'

'Oh! It is but fair he should be made to disgorge a little. He has robbed enough, yonder, among the Turks.'

'Indeed! Do you say so?'

'On that point I have the most reliable information from Baron Hemerlingue, the banker who issued the last Tunisian loan. He knows all about the Nabob. Only fancy——'

Here followed another string of infamous libels. For fifteen years Jansoulet had abominably sponged upon the late Bey. Names of tradespeople were mentioned, as well as tricks full of admirable impudence and effrontery; for instance, the story of a musical frigate, yes, a musical frigate,—like a musical picture in a dining-room—for which he had paid two hundred thousand francs, and sold again for ten millions; a throne sold for three millions, and which was entered in an upholsterer's books, in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, for less than one hundred thousand francs; and the best of the fun was that the Bey having changed his mind, the royal seat had fallen into disgrace, even before it was unpacked, and remained to this moment, nailed in its case, at the Tripoli Custom-house.

Besides these shameless commissions on the

purchase of the least toy, there were accusations of a graver character and just as undeniable, since they came from the same source. There was at Tunis, together with the seraglio, a harem of European women, admirably chosen for his Highness by the Nabob, who had some knowledge of this kind of business, having formerly carried on in Paris—before his departure for the East—the strangest trades: dealer in secondhand tickets at the doors of theatres, manager of a low ball-room, and of another house more notorious still! And the whispering ended in a stifled laugh, the blubbering laugh of men talking among themselves.

The first impulse of the young provincial, on hearing these infamous slanders, was to turn round and cry out:

'That is a lie!'

A few hours sooner he would have done so without hesitation; but since he stood there, he had learnt a lesson of distrust and scepticism. He contained himself, therefore, and listened to

the end, motionless on the same spot, feeling in his inmost self a confused desire to know better the man he served. As for the Nabob, the unconscious subject of this hideous chronicle, he sat quietly in a little *salon* hung in blue, lighted by the subdued flame of two shaded lamps, and was playing a game at *écarté* with the Duke de Mora.

Oh! the magic spell of the golden galleon! —the son of the old nailer sitting face to face at a gaming-table with the first personage of the empire! Jansoulet could hardly trust the Venetian mirror which reflected his triumphant face and his opponent's august skull, parted by a broad line in the middle. And so, to acknowledge this stupendous honour, he did his best to lose decently as many thousand-franc notes as possible, aware that in losing the game he was still the winner; and quite proud to see his money pass into those aristocratic hands whose least motions he studied, whilst they played, cut, or dealt the cards.

Around them a circle was formed, respectfully large—as large as the distance required to make your bow to a prince. These were the public, witnessing that triumph whereat the Nabob assisted as in a dream, intoxicated by fairy-like chords, somewhat deadened through the distance, by songs which reached him in scraps, as if they had waved their way over the sonorous obstacle of a lake, by the perfume which flowers exhale so strangely about the end of Parisian balls—when, the late hour confusing all notions of time, the fatigue of a sleepless night communicates to the brains, reeling in a more nervous atmosphere, a feeling of enjoyable torpor.

The robust nature of Jansoulet, that civilised savage, was, more than any other, influenced by that, to him, hitherto unknown refinement; and he had to exercise all his strength of will not to manifest by some joyful exclamation, by an unseasonable outburst of words and gestures, that feeling of physical gladness which made all

his being quiver, as sometimes happens to those big mountain dogs which are thrown into epileptic fits when they inhale a drop of ether.

. . . . . .

'The sky is beautiful, the pavement dry. If you like, my dear boy, we will dismiss our carriage and go home on foot,' said Jansoulet to his companion, on leaving Jenkins's house.

De Géry accepted the proposal with pleasure. He felt the want of walking, of shaking off in the sharp air the infamies and lies of that worldly comedy which left his heart cold and anxious, and drove to his temples all his life-blood, of which he heard the throbbing in his swollen veins.

He staggered in walking, like an unfortunate man who has undergone the operation for cataract, and who, in the terror of recovered vision, dares not put one foot before the other.

But with what a brutal hand had the operation been performed!

And so that great artist, with her glorious name, that pure and fierce beauty, whose aspect had troubled him like an apparition, was only a courtesan after all!

And Madame Jenkins, that imposing woman, with manners at once so gentle and so proud, was not Madame Jenkins at all; that illustrious practitioner with his open countenance, his kindly welcome, had the impudence to parade a shameful concubinage, and Paris suspected it; but that did not prevent Paris from coming to their *fête*; and lastly, Jansoulet himself, so good, so generous, for whom he felt so much gratitude at heart—he knew him to have fallen into the midst of a band of thieves, a thief himself, and therefore a deserving prey to the organised sponging which was to make him disgorge his millions!

Was all this possible, and how much must he believe of it?

A side glance cast at the Nabob, whose portly person encumbered the footpath, sud-

denly revealed to him in that gait, steadied by the weight of gold, something low and caddish which he had not before noticed.

Yes! he looked the adventurer which he was, kneaded from the slush which covers the Marseilles quays, tramped by all the seaport vagrants and vagabonds.

He was good, oh, yes! like courtesans and thieves. And the streams of gold running through that contaminated, if luxurious channel, and splashing the very walls, now appeared to him to carry all the dross, all the mud of its impure and slimy source.

In that case, he, de Géry, had only one thing to do—go,—leave as quickly as possible that place where he risked to compromise his name, his only paternal inheritance! Yes, of course. But what of his two little brothers over there, in his native province? Who would pay for their education? Who would support the modest home miraculously saved by the handsome salary of the eldest, the head of the family? Those words,

'head of the family,' immediately renewed in him one of those inward struggles in which interest is opposed to conscience—the one stolid, strong, charging headlong, dealing straight blows; the other flying, avoiding the threatened strokes by subtle feints. Meanwhile the good Jansoulet, the ignorant cause of the conflict, was making long strides by the side of his young friend, breathing the air with delight, and smoking his cigar. Never had he been so happy to live; and this party of Jenkins, a *début* in the world for him also, had left him an impression of triumphal arches, of gathering crowds, of flowers strewn on his passage. So true it is that things assume different aspects according to the eyes which behold them. What a success! The Duke, at the moment of parting from him, had invited him to visit his picture gallery; and this meant the doors of Mora's mansion opened to him before a week was past.

Felicia Ruys consented to make his bust, so that, at the next exhibition, the nailer's son

would have his portrait in marble made by the same great artist who had made that of the minister. Was not this satisfaction enough for all his childish vanities? Thus communing with their gloomy or joyous thoughts, they kept walking together, absorbed, absent; so that the silent Place Vendôme, bathed in a blue and icy light, was reached before either of them had spoken a word.

'Already!' said the Nabob. 'I should like to walk a little longer. Does that suit you?'

Whilst they walked two or three times round the Place, the Nabob gave vent, in bursts, to the immense joy which filled his breast:

'How nice it is here! What pleasure to breathe this air! *Tonnerre de Dieu!* I would not give to-day's evening for one hundred thousand francs! What a brave heart, that Jenkins! Do you like the kind of beauty of Felicia Ruys? I dote on it! And the Duke,

what a *grand seigneur*—so simple, so amiable! A fine thing this Paris, eh! my boy!'

'It is too complicated for me. It frightens me,' answered Paul de Géry, in a gloomy voice.

'Oh, yes! I understand,' replied the other, with adorable conceit; 'you are not accustomed to it; but you will get used to it fast enough. Look at me, now; in a month I have made myself quite at home here!'

'It is because you had already been in Paris. You used to live here formerly.'

'Not I—never. Who told you that?'

'Nay, I thought so,' answered the young man; and suddenly, a crowd of thoughts rushing to his mind:

'What ever have you done to Baron Hemerlingue? There is mortal hatred between you.'

The Nabob remained one minute speechless. That name of Hemerlingue, thrown suddenly into his joy, reminded him of the only disagreeable episode of the night.

'To that man, as well as to the others,' said

he, with a saddened voice, 'I have never done anything but good. We commenced life together—miserably. We grew and prospered side by side. When he tried to fly with his own wings I ever helped him on, did my best to support him. It is I who procured him, during ten consecutive years, the contracts for the fleet and army. Almost all his fortune comes from that. Then, one fine morning that Bernese, that heavy-blooded fool, fell in love with an odalisque, whom the Bey's mother had driven from the harem! The wench was handsome—ambitious. She made him marry her; and, naturally, after that beautiful marriage, Hemerlingue was obliged to leave Tunis. They made him believe that it was I who set the Bey against him, and made him banish him out of the principality. That was not true. On the contrary, I obtained from his Highness that the son of Hemerlingue, a child by his first wife, should remain in Tunis to watch over their jeopardised interests, while

the father came to Paris to establish his banking-house. And I have been well rewarded for my kindness! When, at the death of my poor Ahmed, the Mouchir, his brother, came to the throne, the Hemerlingues, in favour again, never ceased trying to do me all the injury in their power with the new master. The Bey still continues to show me a gracious countenance; but my credit is shaken. Well, in spite of all the ill turns Hemerlingue has already done me, and still continues to do me, I was ready this evening to hold out my hand to him. Not only does the wretch reject my proffered friendship, but he sends his wife to insult me—a savage and wicked beast, who does not pardon me for having refused to receive her at Tunis. Do you know what she called me, just now, as she passed before me? "Thief, and son of a dog!" Free enough with her tongue, the odalisque, eh? I tell you what, if I did not know Hemerlingue for as arrant a coward as he is big—— But, after all, what do

I care? Let them say what they like. I don't care a straw for them. What can they do against me? Ruin my credit with the Bey. It is all one to me. I have done with Tunis, and shall leave it as soon as possible. There is only one city—one country in the world—Paris! Open-hearted, hospitable Paris, not at all prudish; where every intelligent man finds elbow-room to do great things. And, do you see, de Géry, I want to do great things. I have my fill of a mercantile life. I have worked twenty years for money; now I am greedy of glory, consideration, fame. I wish to be somebody in the history of my country; and it will be an easy task for me. With my immense fortune, my knowledge of men and things, with what I feel there, in my head, I may aspire to anything—become anything I like. Therefore, my dear boy, believe me, never leave me—(it was as if he answered some secret thought of his young companion) —remain faithful to the old craft. The masts

are strong ; I have my ports full of coals ; and I swear to you, we shall go far, and high, and quick, by Jove !'

The good and simple *Méridional* thus exhaled his plans in the night, with many expressive gestures ; and, at times, as he strode on the broad and desert Place, majestically surrounded by its mute and closed palaces, he raised his head towards the bronze man of the column, as if he called to witness that stupendous parvenu, whose presence in the very heart of Paris gives authority to all ambitions, and likelihood to all dreams !

There is in young men a warm-heartedness, a thirst for self-devotion, which beats responsive to the least touch. As the Nabob spoke, de Géry felt his suspicions vanish, and all his sympathy stirred anew with an additional shade of pity. No, certainly, this man was not a rogue, but a poor deluded, dazed being, intoxicated by fortune, like a man who drinks a heady wine when his stomach has long been

accustomed to water. Alone in the midst of Paris, Jansoulet appeared to him like a foot traveller, loaded with gold, who crosses a wood of evil fame in the dark, and without arms. It would be a noble thing for the *protégé* to watch quietly over the protector, become the clear-sighted Telemachus of this blind Mentor, point out to him the quagmires that he must avoid, defend him against plunderers, and, in short, help him to escape the numberless nocturnal ambuscades which he felt were lying fiercely in wait around the Nabob's millions.

CHAPTER V.

THE JOYEUSE FAMILY.

EVERY morning all the year round, at exactly eight o'clock, a new and almost empty house in an out-of-the-way quarter of Paris rang with cries, with calls and pretty bursts of laughter, which sounded clearly in the deserted staircase:

'Father, don't forget my music.'

'Father, my Berlin wool.'

'Father, bring us penny loaves.'

And the voice of the father would call from below:

'Yaïa, bring me down my portfolio.'

'Well, now, he has actually forgotten his portfolio!'

And there was a merry hurrying up and down the house, a regular race among all those

pretty faces creased with sleep, those disordered coiffures, which they tidied on the way, till at last, bending over the baluster, half-a-dozen young girls bade their ringing 'good-bye' to an old, little gentleman, neat and well-brushed, whose reddish face and spare frame disappeared in the winding staircase. Monsieur Joyeuse was off to his office. Then all these birds out of their cage ran quickly up to the fourth story, shut themselves in again, and took their places at the open windows to catch one more glimpse of their father. The little man turned round; they exchanged from afar kisses with their hands; then the windows were shut and the new and lonely house became once more silent—with the exception of the bills 'to let' dancing their mad saraband in the wind of the unfinished street, as if they, too, were enjoying vastly all this bustle and stir. Shortly after this, the photographer of the fifth floor came down and hung up his case of portraits, always the same, where was seen the gentleman with

the white cravat, surrounded by his daughters, in various groups. He, too, returned to his apartment, and the calmness which suddenly followed the little morning stir would have made one suppose that the father and his girls had shrunk back into the frame of photographs, where they stood smiling and quiet till the evening.

From the Rue St. Ferdinand to Hemerlingue and Son's, his employers, Monsieur Joyeuse had three-quarters of an hour to walk. He walked, his head erect and stiff, as if he feared to disarrange the beautiful bow of his cravat which his daughters had made, or to disturb the hat put on his head by them also; and when the eldest, ever anxious and careful, turned up his coat collar for him so that he might escape the gust of wind at the corner of the street, should it afterwards become as hot as in a hothouse, Monsieur Joyeuse did not pull it down again before he reached his office—like a lover made tidy by the hands of his mistress, who does not

dare to stir lest he should lose the intoxicating perfume.

Left a widower several years before, that good man lived only for his children, thought of them alone, went through life surrounded by those little fair heads which fluttered confusedly around him as in a picture representing the Assumption. All his desires, all his plans had reference to his girls and found their way back again to them, sometimes after long circuits; for Monsieur Joyeuse was a man of a fertile, astonishing imagination—owing, no doubt, to his short neck and small stature, so that his boiling blood rushed round in a trice. Ideas whirled in his head with the rapidity of chaff around a winnowing-fan. In the office, the cold logic of ciphers kept him steady; but once out, his mind took its revenge on that inexorable occupation. The motion of the walk, the habit of treading the same road, which he knew to its smallest incidents, gave full liberty to his imaginative faculties. He therefore invented

extraordinary adventures, sufficient to defray twenty feuilletons. If, for example, Monsieur Joyeuse, in going up the Faubourg St. Honoré, on the right-hand footpath—he always took the right-hand footpath—happened to perceive a heavy laundry cart passing at a quick trot, and driven by a countrywoman, whose child, perched on a bundle of linen, bent a little forward: 'The child!' called out the terrified clerk, 'mind the child!'

His voice lost itself in the noise of the wheels, and his warning cry in the secrets of providence. The cart passed on. He followed it one moment with his eyes, then went on his way. But the drama, commenced in his mind, continued to work itself out with a thousand catastrophes. The child falls, the wheels are about to pass over him, M. Joyeuse rushes forward, saves the little fellow within an inch of his death; only the shaft catches him in the middle of the chest, and he falls, bathed in his blood. Then he sees himself carried to the apothecary's shop through a

gathering crowd. They put him on a litter; they carry him to his place. Then, all at once, he hears the shrieks of his daughters, his loved ones, when they perceive him in that state; and that cry of despair goes so straight to his heart, he hears it so distinctly, it penetrates so deeply, 'Papa! dear papa!' that he actually utters it himself in the street, to the great astonishment of the passers-by, with a hoarse voice that wakes him up out of his imaginary nightmare. Will you have another example of that prodigious imagination?

It rains, it hails; you would not put a dog out. Monsieur Joyeuse takes an omnibus to go to his office; he sits opposite a species of colossus—ferocious head, formidable biceps. M. Joyeuse, very small, very spare, his portfolio on his knees, draws in his legs to make room for the enormous pillars which support the monumental bust of his neighbour.

Amid the noise of the conveyance, of the rain falling on the window-panes, M. Joyeuse

sinks into a waking dream. All at once his neighbour, the colossus, who is a good sort of a fellow after all, is very much surprised to see the little man change colour, grind his teeth, look at him with fierce eyes, the eyes of an assassin—yes! of a veritable assassin—for at this moment M. Joyeuse is in the middle of a terrible dream. One of his daughters is sitting there, opposite him, next to that gigantic brute, and the wretch passes his arm round her waist under her cloak.

'Take away your hand, sir,' says M. Joyeuse twice, mentally. The other sneers. He tries to kiss Élise.

'Ah! blackguard!'

Too weak to defend his daughter, M. Joyeuse, foaming with rage, draws his knife out of his pocket and strikes the insolent man full in the chest. Then he goes away, with head erect, strong in the conscience of an outraged father, and surrenders himself at the next police station.

'I have just killed a man in an omnibus!' At the noise of his voice, actually pronouncing

the sinister words, the unfortunate man wakes up, reads in the scared faces of the travellers that he has spoken aloud. Fortunately the conductor calls out, 'St. Philip! St. Philip! 'Panthéon! Bastille!' and M. Joyeuse hurriedly leaves the omnibus, full of confusion, and in the midst of the general stupefaction.

This imagination, ever at work, gave M. Joyeuse a strange physiognomy—feverish, ravaged—contrasting with the quiet exterior of the little clerk. He lived so many passionate existences in one day! The race of those waking dreamers is more numerous than we are apt to believe, in whom a narrow destiny compresses unused powers, heroic faculties. Dreaming is the valve through which escape, with terrible fermentation, the vapours of the inward furnace, and floating images which soon pass away. Some of those visions come out radiant, others dejected, humiliated, in keeping with the commonplace life which we lead every day. M. Joyeuse was one of that tribe, ever rising to

heights from which it is impossible to return without being somewhat shaken by the rapidity of the journey.

Now, one morning after our dreamer had left his home at his usual hour, and in ordinary circumstances, he commenced at the corner of the Rue St. Ferdinand one of his little personal romances. The end of the year was at hand. It was perhaps a wooden hut which they were nailing in the neighbouring carpenter's yard which brought to his mind the word *étrennes*—New Year's gift;—and at once the word 'gratification' sank in his mind like the first landmark of a stupendous story.

At the end of December, all Hemerlingue's clerks used to receive a double monthly pay; and it is well-known that in little households they construct on the faith of this windfall a thousand ambitious or amiable plans—presents to make, a piece of furniture to renew, a little sum kept in a drawer to meet some unforeseen contingency. M. Joyeuse was not

rich: his wife, a Demoiselle de St. Amand, tormented with ideas of grandeur and worldliness, had put the little home of the clerk on a ruinous footing; and though she had been three years dead, and Bonne-maman managed the house with much economy, yet they had not been able to save anything, so burdened was the past. All at once the good man imagined that the gratification would this year be greater than usual, because of the increase of work occasioned by the Tunisian loan. That loan had been a very good stroke of business for the bankers, perhaps too good, for Monsieur Joyeuse had forgotten himself so far as to say in the office that 'Hemerlingue and Son had this time sheared the Turk a little too close.'

'Oh, yes, the gratification is sure to be doubled,' thought the dreamer, as he walked on. And already he saw himself at the end of the month going with his comrades to pay the new year's visit, through the little staircase

which led to Hemerlingue's private room. The banker announced to them the joyful news, then he kept Monsieur Joyeuse after the others had gone, and behold, that man, usually so cold, enclosed in his yellow grease like a bale of raw silk, became affectionate, friendly, talkative. He wished to know how many daughters Joyeuse had.

'Three—I mean four, Monsieur le Baron. I always mistake, the eldest is so reasonable.'

'How old are they?'

'Aline is twenty, Monsieur le Baron; she is the eldest. Next comes Élise, who prepares for her junior examination; she is eighteen. Henrietta is fourteen, and Yaïa is only twelve.'

That pet name of Yaïa amused the Baron prodigiously; he inquired what were the resources of that interesting family.

'My salary, Monsieur le Baron—nothing else. I had put by a little money, but the illness of my poor wife, the education of my daughters——'

'Your salary is quite insufficient, my dear Joyeuse; I raise it to a thousand francs a month.'

'Oh! Monsieur le Baron, it is too much!'

Although he had said this last sentence aloud, in the back of a policeman, who cast a look of distrust at the little man gesticulating and tossing his head, the poor dreamer did not awake; he admired himself coming home, telling the news to his daughters, and taking them to the theatre that evening to celebrate the happy day. Good heavens! how pretty they were in the front of their box, the Demoiselles Joyeuse! What a bouquet of rosy faces! and behold, on the very next day, the eldest were proposed for. Unfortunately we shall never know by whom, for, at this point of his dream, Monsieur Joyeuse suddenly found himself under the archway of Hemerlingue's house, right against the double-folded door, over which shone the words 'Pay Office' in gold letters.

'I shall always be the same,' said he, with a gentle laugh, as he passed his hand over his moist forehead.

Put in good humour by his fancy, by the roaring fires in the long row of offices, with their inlaid flooring, their gratings, the discreet light of the ground floor, which enabled one to count the gold pieces without being dazzled, Monsieur Joyeuse saluted gaily the other clerks, and put on his working coat and his black velvet cap.

Suddenly was heard a whistle from upstairs, and the cashier, putting his ear to the tube, heard the thick, gelatinous voice of Hemerlingue, the only, the true Hemerlingue—the son was always away—asking for Monsieur Joyeuse. What! Did the dream continue? He felt quite excited, took the little staircase which he was ascending just now so merrily, and found himself in the banker's room—a narrow apartment, with a high ceiling, furnished only with green curtains and enormous

leather armchairs, to suit the stupendous bulk of the head of the firm.

There he was, seated at his desk, which he could not approach, because of his corpulence, hard-breathing, and so yellow that his round face with its crooked nose—the head of a fat and sickly owl—cast a lurid light in the back of that solemn and dark room,—a fat Moorish merchant, mouldering in the damp of his little court. Under his heavy eyelids, painfully raised, his look shone one second when the accountant entered. He beckoned to him to come near, and slowly, coldly, dividing his phrases into fragments, for want of breath, instead of saying: 'M. Joyeuse, how many daughters have you?' this is what he said:

'Joyeuse, you have taken the liberty of criticising in the office my last transaction with respect to the Tunisian loan. Don't try to defend yourself; your speech has been reported to me word for word; and as I can't

allow such a thing in one of my clerks, I give you notice that after this month you will discontinue your connection with the firm.'

The blood rushed to the accountant's face, retreated, rushed up again, causing each time a confused tingling in his ears, and bringing to his brain a tumult of thoughts and ideas.

His daughters!

What would become of them?

Places are so rare at this time of the year!

There rose before his mind's eye a picture of misery, and also the vision of an unfortunate man falling on his knees to Hemerlingue, praying him, threatening him, and springing at his throat in a fit of desperate rage.

All that inward agitation passed over his face like a gust of wind which ripples a lake and digs in it all kinds of changing furrows; but he remained speechless, standing on the same spot. When the banker told him he might go, he went down, staggering, to resume his task in the office.

That evening when he came back to his house in the Rue Ferdinand, Monsieur Joyeuse did not say anything to his daughters. He did not dare. The idea of darkening that exuberant joyousness which constituted the life of their home, of moistening those beautiful clear eyes, was unbearable to him. Besides, he was timid and weak, one of those who always put off everything to the morrow. At first he put off speaking till the end of November, flattering himself with the vague hope that Hemerlingue might change his mind, as if he did not know that mollusk's will, flabby and tenacious on its gold ingot; later, when his salary was paid, and he found another accountant before the high desk where he had stood so many years, he hoped he should soon find another post, and thus repair his ill-luck, before being compelled to confess it.

Every morning he pretended to be off to his office, allowing himself to be tidied and

accompanied as usual, his leather portfolio ready for the numerous purchases of the evening. He had plenty of time now to make these purchases, but he purposely forgot a few, dreading the impossibility of replenishing his exchequer at the end of the month. He had all the day to himself, that interminable day which he passed running through Paris in search of a situation. His friends gave him addresses, excellent recommendations. But in that terrible month of December, so cold and so short, so full of expenses and preoccupations, masters and men bear up with patience. They all try to end the year in peace, putting off to the month of January—that great leap of time in its onward course—all changes, improvements, and attempts at a new life.

When Monsieur Joyeuse presented himself anywhere, he no sooner explained the object of his visit but he saw all faces grow cold. 'What! no longer at Hemerlingue and Son's? How is that?' He explained the matter as well

as he could—through a caprice of the banker, that hard Hemerlingue, whom all Paris knew; but for all that, he felt some coldness, some distrust in this invariable answer: 'Call again after New Year's Day.' And, naturally timid, he dared not at last present himself anywhere. He passed twenty times before the same door, and would never have crossed its threshold, but for the thought of his daughters. That thought alone pushed him by the shoulders, gave strength to his legs, and enabled him to go, on the same day, to the opposite extremities of Paris, to very vague addresses which his friends gave him; to Aubervilliers for example, in the great manufacture of animal charcoal, where they made him come again three consecutive days for nothing.

Oh! the journeys in the rain, in the rime, the doors locked, the master gone out or engaged, the promises made and broken, the fallacious hopes, the weariness of long expectations, the humiliations which await a man

when he asks for work, as if it was a shame to be without! Monsieur Joyeuse learnt to know all these disappointments, as well as the fatigue of the will getting discouraged before the constancy of ill-luck. And as you may well suppose, the hardships of a man in search of a place were increased tenfold by the mirage of his imagination, by those chimeras which rose before him from the pavement of Paris whilst he was treading it in every direction.

He was for a whole month one of those lamentable puppets, talking aloud, gesticulating on the footpaths of Paris, who, every time they knock themselves against some one in the crowd, are heard uttering a kind of vacant exclamation: 'Did I not say so!' or, 'Do not doubt it, sir.' You pass on, you could almost laugh; but you are seized with pity before the unconsciousness of those unfortunate beings pursuing a fixed idea, those blind creatures led on by a dream, drawn by an invisible leash. The worst part of this life was, that when, after

those long, dreary days of inaction and fatigue, Monsieur Joyeuse came home to his house, he must needs go through the comedy of the man returning from his work; must relate the events of the day, the news he had heard, the talk of the office, with which he had always been accustomed to entertain his little girls.

In the homes of humble families, there is always some one name which crops up oftener than other names in the conversations, a name invoked on stormy days, mixed with all the wishes, all the hopes, and even all the games of the children who are themselves impressed with its importance; a name which plays in the house the part of an under-providence, or rather of a familiar and supernatural household god. It is the name of the master, of the manager of some iron-works, of the landlord, of the State Minister, in short, of the man who holds in his powerful hand the happiness, the very existence of the home. At the Joyeuses', it was Hemerlingue, always Hemerlingue, crop-

ping up ten times, twenty times a day, in the conversation of the girls, who associated it with all their plans, with the smallest details of their girlish ambitions. 'Ah! if only Hemerlingue would. . . 'It all depends on Hemerlingue!' Nothing could be more charming than the familiarity with which these little women spoke of the big moneyed-man whom they had never seen.

They kept asking about him. 'Had father spoken with him? Was he in good humour?' &c. And to think, that we all, be our destiny ever so humble, ever so lowly, have always under us other beings, humbler, lowlier than ourselves, in whose eyes we are great, are gods, and to whom, being gods, we are indifferent, disdainful, and cruel!

It is easy to imagine Monsieur Joyeuse's torture, obliged to invent episodes, anecdotes, respecting the wretch who had so savagely turned him out after ten years' loyal service. But he managed to play his little comedy in

such a way as completely to deceive everybody. The girls only noticed one thing, that, when their father came home at night, he always sat down to dinner with great appetite. I should say so, indeed! Since he had lost his situation, the poor man no longer breakfasted.

Days passed on. Still Monsieur Joyeuse found nothing. When I say found nothing, I am not quite correct. He had been offered a post as accountant at the *Caisse Territoriale*; but, too well acquainted with the banking business, knowing all the ins and outs of bubble companies in general, and the *Caisse Territoriale* in particular, he refused to put his foot into that den.

'But,' said Passajon to him—for it was Passajon who, meeting him one day, and hearing he had lost his situation, had proposed to him to come to Paganetti's—'but I tell you it is all right now. We have lots of cash. They pay—they paid me! See what a swell I am now.'

And, in fact, the old porter had a new livery, and under his silver-buttoned tunic, his stomach bulged out in majestic proportions. No matter; Monsieur Joyeuse had resisted the temptation, even after Passajon, opening wide his big blue eyes, had earnestly whispered into his ears these words full of promise:

'The Nabob is in the concern!'

Even after that, Monsieur Joyeuse had had courage to say, No. Was it not better for him to starve than enter a sham concern, whose accounts he might some time be called upon to audit; against which he might have to give his evidence before the court?

He continued to tramp about, therefore; but, full of discouragement, he gave up looking for work. As he must stay out, he dawdled away his time before the book-stalls on the quays, leaning for hours on the parapets, watching the water flow and the boats unload. He became one of those loiterers ever met in the first row of street crowds, who take shelter

against showers under some porch or other, warm themselves at the open-air fires where the asphalte is melting, and sink upon a bench of the boulevards when their legs refuse to carry them farther.

How long life seems when you have nothing to do!

On certain days, however, when Monsieur Joyeuse was too tired, or the sky too inclement, he would wait at the corner of the street until his daughters had shut their windows; then would he creep along the walls, rush quickly up the stairs, hold his breath as he passed before his door, and take refuge in André's room. The latter, in the secret of his misfortune, gave him such welcome as a poor devil has for another. The customers are rare in the outskirts of Paris. He remained hours in the studio, talking in a whisper, reading by the side of his friend, listening to the rain which beat against the window-panes, or to the wind which blew as in the open sea, and shook the

old doors and window-frames in the yard below full of mason's rubbish. In the floor underneath he heard familiar noises, to him full of charm—songs bursting forth in the pleasure of work, peals of laughter, the lesson on the piano given by Bonne-Maman, the tick-tack of the metronome—a delightful stir which gladdened his heart. He lived with his loved ones, who were certainly far from suspecting that he was so near.

Once, while André Maranne was out, Monsieur Joyeuse, faithfully taking care of the studio and new camera, heard two little knocks on the ceiling of the fourth floor, two separate and very distinct knocks, then a pattering, discreet like the trot of a mouse. The photographer's intimacy with his neighbours accounted sufficiently for that prison-like mode of communication; but what did it mean? how should he manage to answer such a call? He chanced it, and repeated the two knocks. The slight drumming and the conversation went

no farther. When André returned, he explained the matter. It was very simple. Sometimes, during the day, the young ladies, who saw their neighbour in the evening only, would inquire about his health, and whether he had any calls or not. The signal he had heard meant, 'How is business getting on to-day?' And Monsieur Joyeuse had answered without knowing it, 'Not badly for this time of the year.' Though young Maranne blushed very much in giving that explanation, Monsieur Joyeuse never doubted his word. But the idea that there were frequent communications between the two floors frightened him with respect to his secret, and from that time he gave up what he called his artistic days. Besides, the moment was drawing near when he could not dissemble his distress any longer. The end of the month was approaching, a fact all the graver that it was also the end of the year.

Paris was already assuming its festive garb of the last December weeks. This is the only

one left of the national and popular rejoicings. The follies of carnival died with Gavarni; the religious festivals, with their chimes drowned in the bustle of the streets, shut themselves in behind the heavy church doors; the fifteenth of August was never more than a barrack feast; but Paris has preserved its allegiance to New Year's Day.

From the beginning of December, vast quantities of children's toys spread themselves about all through the town. There pass trucks full of gilt drums, wooden horses, and playthings by the dozen. If you visit the busy quarters, you find, at all the five stories of houses—old lordly residences where the shops have such high ceilings and majestic folding doors—the people working whole nights, handling gauze, flowers, and spangles, sticking labels on satin boxes, sorting, marking, and packing up—the thousand details of the great toy trade to which Paris gives the stamp of its own elegance. All this has a smell of new wood,

fresh paint, shining varnish, and, in the dust of attics, through the wretched staircases where the people drop all the mud which they have gathered everywhere, are seen shavings of rose-wood, cuttings of satin and velvet, bits of tinsel—all the *débris* of the rich materials employed in making the pretty things destined to dazzle children's eyes.

Then the shop-fronts begin to deck themselves. Behind the bright plate glass, gilt books for New Year presents rise like a sparkling wave in the gaslight; tempting dresses of many colours show their broken and heavy folds; young women, their hair done up turretlike, a bit of ribbon round their necks, praise up their wares, with a little finger lifted in the air, or fill up sacks of *moiré*, into which bonbons fall like showers of pearls.

But, besides this well-to-do, well-housed, well-warmed commerce, intrenched behind its rich shop-fronts, an improvised industry spreads out its wares in wooden booths, opened to the

street wind, and which, built in two rows, give the boulevards the look of a fair. It is here you will find the true interest and poetry of *étrennes*—luxurious about the Madeleine; wearing a comfortable middle-class look in the neighbourhood of the Boulevard St. Denis; more folk-like as you go farther towards the Bastille, those little huts transform themselves according to their public, and calculate their chances of success by the sizes of their customers' purses. Between the huts rise tables full of minute objects, miracles of cleverness, thin and delicate, made out of nothing by the humbler sort of Parisian industry, and which the vogue sometimes snatches up in its run, by reason of their very lightness. Lastly, all the length of the footpaths, the orange women, lost in the row of carriages which graze their skirts, complete the picture of this open-air commerce. You see them heaping up the sunny fruit under their red paper lanterns, and hear them shouting, '*La Valence!*' in the midst of the fog,

the turmoil, the excessive haste which Paris makes to complete the year.

Usually Monsieur Joyeuse made one of that busy crowd which circulates with a noise of people provided with the ready and carrying parcels in all their hands. He ran with Bonne-Maman in search of *étrennes* for the girls, stopped before those little traders who scent the least customer unused to make purchases, and thereupon make plans of stupendous profits. Then followed colloquies, reflections. The choice to be made was always a great puzzle to that complex little brain ever beyond the present hour and the present occupation.

But, alas! this year there was nothing like this. He wandered with melancholy steps through the merry town, feeling all the sadder, all the more vacant, by the contrast of the neighbouring bustle, hustled and knocked about, as all those who hinder the circulation of the busy ones, his heart throbbing with never-ceasing fear, for Bonne-Maman was for the

last few days making transparent and significant allusions with respect to *étrennes*. He avoided, therefore, being left alone with her, and had forbidden her to fetch him after office-hours. But, in spite of all his efforts, the moment was approaching, he felt it well, when the mystery would be impossible, and his burdensome secret must be disclosed. Was Bonne-Maman so terrible, then, that Monsieur Joyeuse feared her so much? Dear, no! A little severe, perhaps; but she had a winning smile that carried instant forgiveness to the culprit; that was all! But Monsieur Joyeuse was a timid man by birth; twenty years' married life with a strong-minded woman who belonged to the *noblesse* had for ever enslaved him, like those felons who, when they have served their time in prison, must still be under surveillance for some period. He, poor man, was under surveillance for life.

One evening, the Joyeuse family were assembled in the little drawing-room, the last

stray of their splendour, in which there were still two easy armchairs, many antimacassars, a piano, two oil-lamps with little green shades, and a whatnot full of kickshaws.

A true home is the privilege of humble families. In order to economise they only lighted, for the whole family, one fire and one lamp, around which they sat, working and playing—a good, big, family lamp, with an old shade representing night scenes and luminous spots, the object of the girls' admiration and delight in their early childhood. Emerging softly from the shadow of the room, four young heads, fair or dark, smiling or busy, were bending under that warm and friendly ray which lighted them from the eyes downwards, kindled the flame of their eyes, gave their youthful faces a transparent glow, warmed them, sheltered them, guarded them from the cold wind moaning outside, from phantoms, ambushes, troubles and terrors, and, in fact, from all the living

slime which prowls about during a winter night at the extreme ends of Paris.

Keeping thus close together in one little room at the top of the lonely house, in the warmth and security of their snug and comfortable home, the Joyeuse family reminds you of a nest on the topmost branch of a giant tree. They sew, they read, they talk a little. A flash from the flame, the crackling of the fire, is all that is heard, with every now and then an exclamation of Monsieur Joyeuse, a little outside the circle, lost in the shadow where he hides his anxious face and all the vagaries of his imagination. Now he fancies that, driven to the last extremity of distress, to the absolute necessity of confessing everything to his children, he must, this very evening, or at the latest to-morrow morning, make a clean breast of it, when suddenly an unhoped-for succour comes to his relief. Hemerlingue, seized with remorse, sends him, as having worked at the Tunisian loan, his December gratification. A tall foot-

man brings it: 'From Monsieur le Baron.' The dreamer pronounces these words aloud: All the pretty faces turn towards him. They laugh, they stir themselves about, and the unfortunate man wakes up.

He is angry with himself for his dilatoriness, for that lying security maintained around him, and which he will have to destroy with one word. What a fool he was to have criticised the Tunis loan! Nay, he upbraids himself for not having accepted the situation at the *Caisse Territoriale*. He had no right to refuse. He, the father of a family, and not strength enough to guard or defend the happiness of his children! And looking at the pretty group, encircled by the lamp-shade, with looks full of calmness which contrast with his own agitation, he is seized with remorse, so violent for a weak soul like his, that his secret trembles on his lips, and is nearly escaping him in an outburst of sobs, when a sudden ring of the door-bell—no fancy

this time—startles them all, and stops him as he was about to speak.

Who could come at this hour? They lived alone since the mother's death, and hardly saw anyone. André Maranne, when he came down to pass a moment with them, used to knock familiarly, like one who knows he is always welcome. Deep silence in the drawing-room; a long conversation on the landing. At last the old servant, who had been with them as long as the lamp, showed in a young man, a stranger, who stopped with evident emotion before the adorable picture of the four darlings nestling around the table. This circumstance gave a little timidity, a little awkwardness, to his entrance. Nevertheless, he explained very well the object of his visit. He had been sent by an acquaintance of his, old Passajon, for lessons in book-keeping. A friend of his found himself connected with a large company, and involved in considerable money transactions. He wished to be of service to the said friend by watching

the use to which the money was put, and ascertaining whether all was correct and above board; but he was a mere barrister, little used to banking operations, and understanding nothing of the financial jargon. Would it be possible for Monsieur Joyeuse, if he took three or four lessons a week ——?

'Oh, certainly, sir, certainly,' stammered the poor father, stunned by that unexpected luck. 'I can undertake to render you, within a few months, quite capable of checking those accounts. Where shall we take the lessons?'

'Here, if you will allow it,' said the young man, 'for I do not wish it to be known that I am working at this. Only I shall be very sorry if, when I come, I scare away everybody, as I did this evening.'

The fact is that, at the first words of the visitor, the four curly heads had disappeared, with little whispers and a great rustling of dresses; and the drawing-room looked very

bare now the great circle of white light was empty.

Monsieur Joyeuse, who easily took umbrage when his daughters were in question, answered that 'the young ladies were accustomed to retire every evening early.' This was said in a dry, sharp tone, which plainly conveyed, 'Let us speak of our lessons, young man, if you please.'

The days and evening hours were settled.

With respect to terms, it should be whatever Monsieur pleased.

Monsieur mentioned a sum.

The accountant became very red in the face. It was as much as he used to get at Hemerlingue's.

'Oh, no! It is too much.'

But the other did not listen to him: seemed embarrassed, and hesitated, as if he had something very difficult to say, and then resolutely:

'This is for the first month,' said he.

'But, sir ——'

The young man insisted. He was a stranger. It was fair he should pay beforehand. Passajon had clearly given him a hint. Monsieur Joyeuse understood it, and said half aloud, 'Thanks! oh, thanks!' in a voice so full of emotion that he could not say more. This was life—life for a few months; time to turn himself round, and find another place. His darlings would not want anything. They would have their *étrennes*.

'Next Wednesday, then, Monsieur Joyeuse?'

'Next Wednesday, Monsieur ——?'

'De Géry. Paul de Géry.'

They parted, both delighted and dazzled, the one by the apparition of that unexpected saviour, the other by the amiable picture of which he had but caught a glimpse—the picture of all those young girls grouped round the table covered with books, copy-books, and skeins, and all wearing upon their faces an expression of upright industry. This was for de Géry the revelation of a new Paris, courageous, homely, and very different from that which he knew—

a Paris about which *feuilletonistes* and reporters never speak, and which reminded him of his province, only with a touch of refinement, a charm which a peaceful refuge acquires by contrast with the surrounding scramble and turmoil.

CHAPTER VI.

FELICIA RUYS.

'AND your son, Jenkins; what has become of him? Why don't we see him any more at your place? He was a nice fellow!'

Felicia asked the question in that peculiar tone of contemptuous abruptness which she almost always assumed when addressing the Irishman, and worked away, meanwhile, at the Nabob's bust which she had just commenced. She posed her model, took and left the boasting-tool, wiped her fingers slowly on the little sponge, whilst the tranquil light of a beautiful Sunday afternoon fell on the glass rotunda of the studio. Sunday was Felicia's 'at home' day, if that be the right word to express the fact that on that day, her door was

open to all—people who came, went out, sat down one moment, whilst she went on with her work, and never even interrupted her conversation to welcome the new-comers. There were artists with sharp refined features and shaggy beards; and here and there the white head of some of her father's 'romantic' friends. There were amateurs also, men of the world, bankers, stock-brokers, and a few young 'swells' who came for the handsome girl rather than her sculpture, to be able to say, in the evening, at their clubs: 'I was with Felicia to-day.' Among them Paul de Géry, thoughtful, sunk in an admiration which penetrated his heart more and more every day, tried to understand the beautiful Sphinx in red cachemire and écru guipures, who cut away bravely at the clay. She wore a burnisher's apron which went up to her neck, and above which rose her proud little head. On her face flitted those transparent lights, veiled gleams which denoted the fire of inspira-

tion burning within. Paul could never forget what he had heard about her, and he came here to study her, doubting, full of trouble, yet charmed, swearing every time that he would come no more, but never missing one Sunday. There was also, always sitting at the same place, and forming, so to speak, a part of the house chattels, a little woman with grey, powdered hair, a Fanchon cap around her fresh face, resembling a somewhat faded crayon portrait, who sat in the subdued light of the recess, smiling gently, her hands on her knees, motionless like a Fakir. Jenkins, friendly, genial, with his black eyes and his apostle look, went from one to another, known and loved by all. He, too, was always there, on Felicia's 'at home'; and verily, he must have had a good stock of patience, considering that all the rebukes of the beautiful artist were reserved for him alone. But he never seemed to perceive it, and continued to visit with the same kindly serenity the daughter of his old friend

Ruys, whom he had loved so much, nursed so faithfully to his last minute.

For once, however, the question Felicia had just asked him about his son, appeared extremely disagreeable to him; he answered, therefore, with a real expression of bad humour:

'I don't know any more than you do what has become of him. He has gone away altogether. He did not like our home; he only likes Bohemians like himself.'

Felicia made a bound which startled them all.

'This is too much.—Come, Jenkins, what do you call "Bohemians"? A charming word, by-the-bye, which ought to call up images of long journeys in the sun, halts in some corner of a wood, the sweetest fruits and purest water eaten and drunk on the way, just as they present themselves to the eyes. But, since you have made an insult and a stain of that graceful, poetic expression, tell me, whom do you apply

it to? Some poor unkempt devil, in love with his ragged independence, who starves in his attic, too near the clouds which he contemplates, or who seeks rhymes under the roof through which the rain filters? But those madmen become rarer every day, who out of their horror for conventionalities, a commonplace and stupid life, leave the open road and cross with a bound the ditch which separates them from freedom. All that is ancient history, it is Murger's "Bohème" with the hospital at the end of the chapter, the terror of children, the comfort of parents, the Red Riding-Hood eaten up by the Wolf. All that has passed away. You know very well that artists are now the most orderly people in the world. They make money, pay their debts, and contrive to look like the most commonplace people. Bohemians must be sought for elsewhere. Society is full of them; only it is in your *monde* they are found. By Jove! they do not wear a label, and nobody distrusts

them. But with respect to the uncertainty and looseness of their mode of living, they have nothing to envy those they so scornfully call "irregulars." Ah! if people only knew all the turpitudes, all the fantastic and monstrous stories which a black coat, the most correct of your modern vestments, sometimes conceals ——! Look here, Jenkins, the other night, at your party, I amused myself with counting all those adventurers of the high ——'

The little, fresh-coloured, and powdered old woman called out warningly from her place:

'Felicia, take care!'

But she went on without minding:

'Who is Monpavon, Doctor? and Bois-Landry, and De Mora himself? and——'

She was going to say, 'and the Nabob?' but stopped herself.

'And how many others besides? Speak contemptuously of the Bohemians! But your *clientèle*, yours, O sublime Jenkins, fashionable doctor, is made of nothing else. There are the

Bohemians of commerce, of finance, of politics, all the men out of their proper sphere, all the soiled reputations of all the castes; and the higher you go the more you find of them; because rank gives impunity, and fortune can buy silence.'

As she spoke she looked excited, hard, her lips curled up with savage scorn. The other laughed the wrong side of his mouth, assumed a light, condescending tone which plainly meant, 'Foolish head, foolish head!' looked at the Nabob with uneasy, suppliant eyes, as if to beg his pardon for that tissue of impertinent paradoxes.

But Jansoulet, far from appearing shocked, felt so proud to sit to this beautiful artist, so proud of the honour done him, that he nodded approvingly with his head.

'She is right, Jenkins,' said he, at last; 'she is right. We are the true Bohemians. Look at me, for example, look at Hemerlingue, two of the richest men in Paris. When I think from where we started, all the trades through which

we have waded our way up——Hemerlingue, an old sutler; I, why, I have carried bags of corn upon the port of Marseilles, for a living! And the chances, the luck to which we owe our fortune—for all fortunes are made by luck in our days. By all the powers! Go under the colonnade of the Bourse from three to five.—— But, I beg your pardon, Mademoiselle, with my trick of gesticulating while speaking, I have lost the posé. Let me see—like this?'

'It is useless,' said Felicia, throwing her boasting-tool with the movement of a spoilt child. 'I shall do nothing more to-day.'

A strange girl, this Felicia! The true daughter of an artist, a genial and careless artist, the type of the romantic school, as Sebastian Ruys was. She had never known her mother, born as she was from one of those passing *liaisons*, which broke suddenly into the sculptor's bachelor's life like swallows into an open house, and left it immediately because they could not nestle there.

For once, the lady, in taking her flight, had left to the great artist, then about forty years of age, a beautiful child, which he had legitimatised and brought up, and which became the joy and passion of his life. Till the age of thirteen Felicia had lived with her father, singing her childish and tender note in that studio full of loungers, models, big greyhounds, lying all their lengths upon the ottomans. There was a corner reserved for her, for her attempts in sculpture, a whole diminutive arrangement, a tripod, some wax; and old Ruys called out to those who came in:

'Don't go there; don't disturb anything; 'tis the little one's corner.'

And, naturally, at ten she could hardly read, but handled the boasting-tool with marvellous skill. Ruys would have liked to keep always with him that child, who did not disturb him in the least, and who had, when as yet a mere baby, matriculated in the great brotherhood of art. But it was a pity to see that child in the midst

of the free and easy frequenters of the house, the everlasting goings and comings of models, the discussions of an art, so to speak, altogether physical; and even taking her place at the noisy dinner table on Sundays, among five or six women, all of whom her father said 'thou' to: actresses, dancers, or singers, who after dinner sat smoking, their elbows on the table, revelling in stories of doubtful taste, which the host seemed to relish so much. Happily, childhood is protected by the resisting power of its own candour, a sort of enamel, on the surface of which all the impurities glide away. Felicia was getting noisy, turbulent, and badly brought up, but without being touched by all that slime which passed over her little soul.

Every year, during the fine season, she passed a few days with her godmother, Constance Crenmitz—the elder Crenmitz, whom all Europe had so long called 'the illustrious dancer,' and who now lived in peaceful retirement at Fontainebleau. The arrival of the

little demon gave for a time to the life of the old dancer an agitation which it took the rest of the year to calm down again.

The frights which the child gave her, with her boldness in climbing, jumping, and riding, all the buoyancy of her free nature, made the visits of the young girl at the same time a delightful and terrible thing—delightful, for she worshipped Felicia, the only family tie which remained to that poor old salamander in her retirement, after thirty years of *chassés croisés* in the flare of the gas,—terrible, for the demon ferreted remorselessly the home of the dancer, so neat, so clean, so perfumed, just like her box at the opera, a very museum of souvenirs that dated from all the stages in the world.

Constance Crenmitz was the only feminine element in the childhood of Felicia. Childish, with narrow ideas, her mind tinged for life by the rosy hue of her padded tights, she displayed, at least, a coquettish neatness, and could use her skilful fingers to sew, to em-

broider, to tidy things, leaving the trace of her light and precise activity in every corner of a roomy apartment. She alone undertook to polish the young savage, and to awake discreetly the woman hidden in that strange being, on whose back the cloaks, and furs, and all the elegances of fashion fell in folds too straight, or assumed a strange, odd appearance.

It was also the dancer—how neglected this poor little Ruys must have been!—who, overcoming her father's egotism, insisted, with the sculptor, on a necessary separation, when Felicia was twelve or thirteen years of age. She, moreover, took upon herself to find a suitable school—a good, comfortable school, purposely chosen at the top of an airy faubourg, established in a roomy old mansion, surrounded with old walls and high trees, a sort of convent, apart from conventual constraint, and without the contempt which convents profess for serious studies.

There was a good deal of work done in Madame Belin's school. The pupils never went

out except on great festivals, and were without communications with the outside world, except such as were derived on Thursdays from their parents' visits, in a little garden planted with flowery shrubs, or in the immense parlour, with gilt and carved door-tops. The first appearance of Felicia in that well nigh monastic home caused a good deal of stir. Her dress, which the Austrian dancer had chosen, her hair, which fell in curls down to her waist, her swinging and boyish movements, excited some adverse criticism. But she was a Parisian, and could quickly accommodate herself to all situations and places, so that after a few days she wore with better grace than anyone the little black apron, to which the most coquettish of them fastened their watches, the straight skirt—a severe and harsh regulation at that time, when women used to swell out in numberless flounces—the uniform head-dress, two plaits joined together below the neck, like that of Roman peasants.

Strange to say, the punctuality of the

classes, their calm regularity, were just suited to Felicia's nature, to her quick and intelligent disposition, in which a taste for study was brightened by her juvenile boisterousness, at ease in the noisy liveliness of recreation.

She became a favourite. Among those daughters of great merchants, Parisian notaries, or gentlemen farmers—a little world of its own, respectable, and somewhat stiff—the well-known name of old Ruys, the respect with which Paris surrounds an artistic reputation, gave to Felicia a distinguished and envied place, rendered more brilliant still by her success in the classes, by a positive talent for drawing, and by her beauty, that superiority which all, even young girls, are disposed to acknowledge.

In the pure atmosphere of the school, she experienced an extreme pleasure in resuming her sex, or rather in becoming more womanly, in learning another kind of order and regularity than that of the amiable dancer whose kisses left behind them an after-taste of rouge, and

whose gushing outbursts were not quite natural. Old Ruys went into an ecstasy every time he visited his daughter, on finding her more lady-like—able to walk, to enter or leave a room with that pretty bow which made all those who saw Madame Belin's charges desire to hear again the rustling of their trailing dresses.

At first he came often; then, as he was short of time to accomplish all the works he had undertaken, and for which he had received money advances that paid for the waste, the extravagances of his way of living, he was seen less frequently in the parlour. At last an illness overtook him, when already exhausted by an incurable anæmia, and he remained weeks without going out, without working; then he wished to have his daughter again with him, and, from her boarding-school which protected her by its healthful peacefulness, Felicia fell into her father's studio, still frequented by the same guests—parasites whirling round any celebrity, in the number of

whom disease had introduced a new personage, Dr. Jenkins.

The handsome, open countenance, the look of frankness, of serenity, spread over the person of that already well-known physician, who spoke of his art in such an offhand way, and yet performed such miraculous cures, the care which he lavished on her father, produced a strong impression on the young girl. Jenkins became at once a friend, a confidant, a watchful and gentle guardian. Sometimes when, in the studio, anyone, the father himself, dropped a lax word, a coarse joke, the Irishman knitted his brows, smacked his lips slightly, or attracted the attention of Felicia to something else. He used often to take her out to pass the day with Madame Jenkins, doing his best to prevent her from becoming again the little savage that she was before going to school, or even something worse—a thing by no means unlikely in the moral neglect, sadder than any other, in which she was left.

But the young girl had, to protect her, something still better than the irreproachable and worldly example of the fair Madame Jenkins, namely, the art which she worshipped, the enthusiasm which that art put in her expansive nature, her love of the beautiful, of the truthful, which passed from her thoughtful brain, pregnant with ideas, into her fingers, with a little quiver of nerves, a yearning for the completion of the thing undertaken, for the realisation of the image conceived. She worked the whole day at her sculpture, concentrated her reveries with that happiness of youthful instinct which gives so much charm to the first works of an artist. That was it which kept her from regretting too much the severe discipline of Madame Belin's school, sheltering yet light like the veil of a novice who has not yet pronounced her vows, and preserved her also from the contamination of dangerous conversations which the exclusive pre-occupation of her mind prevented her from understanding.

Ruys was proud of that talent which grew by his side. Becoming weaker every day, he had already reached that stage which for an artist is one of regrets. Felicia was the consolation of his almost terminated career. The chisel which trembled in his hand was caught again near him, with a virile firmness and confidence, tempered by the delicacy which a woman can bring to bear in realising her conception of art. A strange sensation, this double paternity, this reversion of genius, abandoning him who passes away, to enter into him who is coming, like those beautiful familiar birds which, on the eve of a death, desert the threatened roof, and fly to a merrier dwelling!

In the latter times, Felicia, a great artist, but still a child, executed half of her father's works, and nothing was more touching than that collaboration of the father and daughter, in the same studio, around the same group. It was not always smooth sailing. Although she was her father's pupil, Felicia had already

an originality of her own, and rebelled against a despotic direction. She had the bold conceptions of beginners, those insights into the future reserved to young talents; and, contrary to Sébastien Ruys' romantic traditions, she displayed a tendency to modern realism; she felt the want of hoisting that old glorious flag upon some new monument.

Then did terrible tussles take place between them; discussions, out of which the father came off vanquished, conquered by the logic of his daughter, wondering at all the way children can walk, whilst the old ones, who have opened the gate for them, remain stationary near the starting-post. When she worked for him, Felicia yielded easily enough; but on the subject of her own sculpture she was intractable. And so 'The Bowler,' the first work she exhibited, and which obtained such a success at the *salon* of 1862, was the object of such violent scenes between the two artists, of such strong contradictions, that Jenkins had to interfere, and

preside at the departure of the plaster which Ruys threatened to break.

With the exception of those little dramas, which in nothing affected their feelings, these two beings loved each other with the foreboding, and presently with the cruel certainty, of an approaching separation. All at once a horrible event occurred in the life of Felicia. One day Jenkins took her to his house to dine with him, as it often happened. Madame Jenkins was away with her son for two days, but the doctor's age, his almost fatherly friendship, were warrant enough to keep with him this young girl of fifteen—the fifteen years of an oriental Jewess, blooming with precocious beauty, yet still a child.

The dinner was very merry, Jenkins amiable and friendly as usual. After dinner they passed into the doctor's study. Suddenly, in the middle of a familiar, friendly conversation on her father, his health, their labours, Felicia felt like the cold of an abyss between that man

and her ; then the brutish grasp of a Faun's paw. She saw before her an unknown Jenkins, mad, stammering, laughing with a stupid laugh. In the suddenness, the unexpectedness of this brute's assault, another than Felicia, a girl of her own age, but truly innocent, would have been lost. What saved the poor child was her knowledge. She had heard so much at her father's table ! Besides, art, the life of the studio . . . . ! Hers was not ingenuous, artless innocence. She instantly understood the meaning of that attack. She bounded up, struggled, and, not being strong enough, called out. He was seized with fear, let go his hold ; and she found herself, standing, free, with that man on his knees before her, crying, begging pardon. He had yielded to a moment of folly. She was so beautiful ; he loved her so much ! For months he had struggled ! But now it was all over ! Never—no—never more ! He would not even touch the border of her dress.

She did not answer ; she trembled, smoothed

her hair, her clothes, with quivering fingers. She must go, instantly, alone. He sent a servant with her; and as she was entering the carriage, he whispered:

'Not a word about this. It would be your father's death.'

He knew her so well, the wretch, was so sure to keep her quiet with that idea, that he came back the next day as if nothing had happened, beaming as ever, with the same honest face. And, in fact, she never spoke of this to her father or anybody else. But from that day a great change took place in her. It was as if her pride had relaxed. She had caprices, moments of weariness, a curl of disgust in her smile; and sometimes she would feel a sudden anger against her father, stare at him with a look of scorn, as if she reproached him with not having better watched over her.

'What is the matter with the girl?' said old Ruys.

And Jenkins, with a physician's authority,

accounted for it all by her age—some physical perturbation. He avoided addressing the young girl, relying on time to efface the sinister impression, and not yet despairing of success. For he kept his madness, seized with the blind love of men of forty-seven, the incurable passion of mature age. And that was his punishment, the hypocrite! The strange state of his daughter gave great pain to the sculptor, but that pain was of short duration. Ruys passed suddenly away, crumbled down all at once, like all Jenkins' patients. His last words were:

'Jenkins, I recommend my daughter to you!'

Those words were so gloomily ironical that Jenkins, standing by the bedside, felt himself growing pale.

Felicia was stupefied rather than grieved. To the feeling of stupor caused by death, hitherto unknown to her, and which had struck a being so dear, was added the feeling of an immense solitude full of darkness and danger.

A few friends of the sculptor formed themselves into a sort of family council to deliberate on the fate of that poor child left without friends or fortune. They had found fifty francs in a bowl, where Sébastien used to put his money, in the studio, on a piece of furniture well known to the needy, and to which they paid visits without any scruples. No other inheritance, so far as money went; but the furniture constituted the most sumptuous museum of curiosity and art. There were also a few valuable pictures, some money due, but barely sufficient to cover innumerable debts. They spoke of a sale. When Felicia was consulted about it, she told them: 'It was all one to her; let them sell all; but, for heaven's sake, let them leave her alone.'

But the sale did not take place, thanks to the godmother, the good Crenmitz, who made her appearance all at once, gentle and quiet as usual.

'Do not listen to them, my dear; sell no-

thing. Your old Constance has fifteen thousand francs a year, which are some day to be yours. You shall enjoy them now, that's all. We shall live here together. You will see that I am not in the way. You shall work at your sculpture, and I shall manage the house. Do you accept?'

All this was said so tenderly, in the childish accent of foreigners speaking French, that the young girl was deeply moved. Her frozen heart melted, a burning gush of tears broke from her eyes. She rushed and sank in the arms of the old dancer.

'Oh, godmother, how good you are! No, never leave me more. Stay with me for ever. Life frightens and disgusts me. I see so much hypocrisy, so much falsehood!'

And the old woman having made her silky and embroidered nest in that house, which looked like a travellers' camp loaded with riches from all countries, these two contrary natures settled down to begin life in common.

Nor was the sacrifice a slight one which

Constance had made to her dear demon, to leave her retirement at Fontainebleau for Paris which she hated. The day when that dancer, so well known for the extravagant caprices which made her scatter away princely fortunes with her five open fingers, had come down from her last ovation, half blinded with the glare of the foot-lights, and had tried to live an ordinary life, to manage her little savings and her modest house, she became a prey to the most shameless swindling. Poor ignorant butterfly, scared by reality, and knocking her head against a crowd of unknown difficulties!

When she assumed the management of Felicia's house, the responsibility became far more serious because of the waste formerly introduced by the father, and kept up by the daughter—two artists who despised saving. She had also other difficulties to conquer. She could not bear the studio, where discussions on art, and the nudity of the ideas expressed, got inextricably mixed with the brilliant and wavy whirls of an im-

penetrable cloud of tobacco-smoke. It invariably gave her a headache. The sort of chaff called *blague* frightened her above all things. Being a foreigner, and, as a former divinity of the green-room, accustomed to the old politeness and gallantry of the past *régime*, she did not understand *blague*, was frightened by the frantic exaggerations and paradoxes of those Parisians whose wits were sharpened by the freedom of an artist's studio.

She, who had never had wit but in the quick motions of her toes, felt intimidated by *blague*. She felt it reduced her to the level of a mere lady's companion. And, indeed, in looking at that amiable, silent, smiling old lady, sitting in the light of the glass rotunda, her knitting on her knees, like a *bourgeoise* of Chardin, or walking with hurried steps side by side with her cook along the long street of Chaillot, where the nearest market-place was situated, no one would ever have suspected that the good woman had once held kings, princes,

all the amorous tribes of nobles and financiers, attentive to the caprices of her points, or the swell of her gauze.

Paris is full of those extinguished stars, fallen into the crowd.

Some of those illustrious ones, triumphers of a bygone past, preserve a sort of bitterness in their hearts; others, on the contrary, enjoy devoutly the remembrance of it, chew with ineffable pleasure their joyous and ended glory, asking only for rest, solitude, and obscurity, to enable them to gather their thoughts and remember; so that when they die men are quite astonished to learn they had lived so long.

Constance Crenmitz was one of those happy ones. But what a strange home was that of the two artists, as childish one as the other, bringing into the common stock inexperience and ambition, the tranquillity of a life nearly spent, and the fever of a life beginning its struggle; add to that all sorts of visible differences, the gentle demeanour of the blonde,

white like a faded rose, looking under her light-coloured toilet like the remnant of a firework; the brunette, with correct features, her beautiful form wrapped up in sombre materials with simple folds, which gave her a semblance of virility.

An unforeseen occurrence, a whim, the ignorance of the least thing, occasioned in the resources of this household an extreme disorder, remedied only by great privations, the dismissal of some servant, or reforms exaggerated to the verge of absurdity. During one of those crises Jenkins had made delicate and plausible offers of services. They were contemptuously rejected by Felicia.

'It was not right of you to be so harsh with the poor Doctor,' Constance would say. 'After all, he said nothing offensive. An old friend of your father like him!'

'He, the friend of anybody! A veritable Tartufe!'

And Felicia, unable to contain herself, turned her anger into irony, imitated Jenkins'

rounded movements, placed her hand on her heart, and said, with a thick, half-whispered tone of voice, full of spurious effusion:

'Let us work for mankind, let us do good—do good without expectations of any requital! Nothing more.'

Constance laughed till the tears started in her eyes, so admirable was the resemblance.

'Still, you are too hard on the poor man; he will cease to come, at last.'

'No fear!' said a toss of the young girl's head.

In fact, he continued to come—gentle, amiable, hiding his passion so that he never showed it except when he became excited by his jealousy of some new comer; attentive to the dancer, who liked him for his gentleness, and because he was a man of her own time—that time when men on approaching a lady used to kiss her hand, and pass a compliment on her good looks.

One morning Jenkins, having called during

his round, found Constance sitting idly in the ante-room.

'You see, Doctor, I am mounting guard,' said she quietly.

'How is that?'

'Felicia is working. She wishes not to be disturbed, and servants are so stupid. That's why I am mounting guard.'

Then, seeing the Irishman make a step in the direction of the studio,

'Do not go in,' she said; 'she desired me most particularly not to let anyone go in.'

'Not me!'

'Don't, pray; she would scold me.'

Jenkins was about to leave, when a peal of laughter from Felicia reached him through the hangings, and made him raise his head.

'Is she not alone?'

'No, the Nabob is with her. He is sitting to her for his bust.'

'Why this mystery, then? This is very strange.'

He was making long strides up and down the room, looking furious, but containing himself.

At last he burst out. It was most improper to permit a young girl to closet herself thus with a man. He was surprised that a serious woman like Constance, who loved Felicia so much . . . It all looked very bad!

The old lady was astounded. Felicia was not a girl like any other. Besides, what harm could there be with the Nabob; such a grave man, and so ugly? And Jenkins knew very well that Felicia never consulted anyone, and only followed her own mind.

'No, no! That is quite impossible! I will not allow this,' said the Irishman.

And without otherwise minding the dancer, who raised her arms to heaven, as if to call it to witness what was going to take place, he went towards the studio; but, instead of walking straight into it, he opened the door gently, and raised a corner of the hanging,

so as to see one part of the room—that where the Nabob sat, at some distance from the door.

Yes, there he sat, his neck bare, his waistcoat open, talking half loud, and with a certain excitement. Felicia answered in the same tone of merry whispering. The *séance* was animated enough indeed! Then followed a moment of silence, the rustling of the artist's skirt as she approached her model; and he saw her turn down with a familiar motion his linen collar, and run her light hand all round that sunburnt skin of his.

That Ethiopian mask whose muscles were dancing with pleasure, his long lashes turned down, like a sleepy beast when you stroke it on the back; the bold outlines of that young girl, bending over that strange face as if to study its proportions; then a violent, irresistible snap of the Nabob, who lightly caught the small fine hand, and took it to his thick, quivering lips! Jenkins saw all that in a red flash, like a lightning's.

The noise he made in walking in compelled the two persons to resume their respective places, and in the glaring light which dazzled his eyes, staring like those of a cat on the watch, Jenkins perceived the young girl standing indignant and surprised.

'Who is there? Who allowed you, sir?' said she, whilst the Nabob remained on his *estrade*, his shirt collar open, turned to stone, motionless and speechless, like a monument.

Jenkins, somewhat sheepish-looking, frightened at his own audacity, stammered an apology. He had something urgent to mention to Monsieur Jansoulet, important news which did not brook any delay. He knew for certain that there would be a distribution of crosses on the 16th of March. The Nabob's face, somewhat discomposed at first, immediately relaxed.

'Oh, indeed!'

He forgot the pose. The affair was sufficiently important, by Jove! Monsieur de la

Perrière, the empress's private secretary, had received orders to visit Bethlehem. Jenkins came to fetch the Nabob and take him to the Tuileries, there to settle the day with the secretary. That visit to Bethlehem was as good as the cross to him.

'Quick, let us go, dear Doctor; I am at your disposal.'

He was no longer angry with Jenkins for having disturbed him. He tied his cravat feverishly, forgetting in his new emotion Jenkins's intrusion—for ambition was the strongest of his passions.

Whilst those two men were talking in a half-loud voice, Felicia, motionless before them, with quivering nostrils and scornful lips, looked at them as if to say: 'Well! I am waiting!'

Jansoulet apologised for breaking the *séance*; but 'a visit of the highest importance——'

She smiled with pity.

'Never mind, never mind. The work has come to a point when I can go on without you.'

'Oh, yes!' said the Doctor; 'it is nearly done.'

He added, with the tone of a connoisseur:

'It is a fine work.'

He had relied on that compliment to protect his retreat, and he was about to disappear with a bow; but Felicia stopped him violently.

'You, stay! I have to speak with you.'

He saw in her look that he had better yield, if he did not wish to quarrel with her.

'Dear friend, you will excuse me; Mademoiselle has a few words to say to me. My carriage is at the door; get in, I follow you.'

When the door had closed on the heavy, retreating steps, they looked one another fully in the face:

'You must be mad or drunk,' she said, 'to have dared such a thing? How dare you intrude upon me, when I am not "at home"? How dare you be so rude? By what right?'

'The right which a desperate and unconquerable passion gives.'

'Silence, Jenkins; you say what I will not hear. I allow you to come here out of pity, by habit, because my father liked you. But never speak more of your—love'—she whispered the word as if it shamed her—'or else you shall never see me again, were I to die, to escape from you once for all.'

A naughty child caught in the deed does not bend his head with greater humility than did Jenkins, as he answered:

'It is quite true. I was wrong. A moment of folly, of blindness. But why do you break my heart so?'

'I don't even think of you.'

'Whether you think of me or not, I am there; I see what is going on, and your flirting kills me.'

She blushed slightly at this reproach.

'I flirt! Whom with?'

'With that!' said the Irishman, showing the magnificent, baboon-like bust.

She tried to laugh.

'The Nabob! you are mad!'

'Don't tell a fib. Do you think that I am blind, that I do not understand all your tricks? You stay too long alone with him. I was there, just now. I saw you'—he lowered his voice as if his breath failed him—'What do you seek, you strange and cruel child? I have seen you refuse the handsomest, the noblest, the greatest. That little de Géry's eyes devour you, and you don't even take any notice of him. The Duke de Mora himself has not been able to touch your heart. And you choose that man, who is ugly, vulgar, who does not think of you, who has something else than love in his head. You saw how he left you! What is your object? What do you expect from him?'

'I want him—to—marry me. That's all!' And coldly, with a softened tone, as if that confession had brought her down to the level of the man she despised so much, she explained to him her motives. The life she led had no

issue. She had acquired luxurious, expensive, and disorderly habits, which nothing could conquer, and which must unavoidably lead to misery herself and that good creature Crenmitz, who allowed herself to be ruined without uttering a word of complaint. In three or four years, at the most, there would be nothing left. Then they must be reduced to expedients, debts, rags, the slipshod way of artists; or else, a lover, a protector—slavery and infamy!

'Nonsense,' said Jenkins; 'am I not here?'

'Anything rather than you,' said she, drawing herself up. 'No, what I want, what I must have, is a husband who will defend me against others and against myself, who will keep me from a heap of black things which frighten me when I am weary, of the chasms into which I can sink and be swallowed up; somebody who will love me when I am at work, and relieve my old fairy when she is tired out. Now, that man will suit me, and I thought of him as soon as I saw him. He is ugly, but he is good; and

then he is madly rich, and riches, when they reach that degree, must be an amusing thing . . . Oh, I know . . . There is probably a stain in his life, which brought him luck. All that gold cannot have been honestly come by. But truly, Jenkins, your hand on that heart which you invoke so often, do you think that I am a very tempting wife for an honest man? Look, which of all those young men, who beg as a favour to come here, has ever thought of proposing for me? Not one. De Géry no more than the others. I charm, but I frighten. It is simple enough. What can anyone suppose of a girl brought up as I have been, without a mother, without a family, pell mell with my father's models and mistresses?—and what mistresses, too!—and Jenkins for my only protector! Oh! when I think of it—when I think——'

And distant memories rose in her mind and increased her anger: 'Ah, yes! I am a female adventurer, and that male adventurer is the husband to suit me.'

'Wait, then, till he is a widower,' answered Jenkins, quietly. 'And in that case you run the risk of waiting long, for his Levantine seems to be in very good health.'

Felicia Ruys became pale.

'What! Is he married?'

'Married he certainly is, and the father of a heap of children. The whole *smala* arrived two days ago.'

She remained for one minute as if thunderstruck, staring into vacancy, her cheeks shivering.

Opposite her stood the broad mask of the Nabob, with his flat nose, his good-natured, sensual mouth, the shiny clay replete with life and truth. She contemplated it one moment, made one step forward, and, with a motion of disgust, knocked down from its high block the slippery and smutty mass, which spread on the floor like a heap of mud.

CHAPTER VII.

JANSOULET AT HOME.

He had been twelve years married, but had never mentioned it to his Parisian *entourage*, by an Oriental habit—that reticence which men of the East observe with respect to their women. Suddenly they heard that Madame was coming, that apartments were being prepared for herself, her children, and her women. The Nabob took the whole second floor in a house of the Place Vendôme, the tenant of which was bought off at prices befitting a Nabob. The stables were widened; the staff doubled; and one day coachmen and carriages went to fetch Madame at the terminus of the Lyons Railway. She had come from Marseilles by a special train loaded with gazelles, negresses, and little nig-

gers. She arrived in a state of frightful exhaustion, done up and soured by her long journey in a railway carriage, the first she had made in her life; for she had been brought quite a child to Tunis, and had never left it since.

Two negroes carried her from her carriage to her apartments in an armchair, which from that time always remained under the porch below, ready for these difficult removals.

Madame Jansoulet could not go up the stairs; that made her dizzy. She would not use a lift, which groaned under her weight; besides, she never walked. Bulky, bloated to a degree that it was impossible to tell her age between twenty-five and forty; a rather pretty face, but with deformed features, dull eyes under heavy eyelids, striated like shells; ridiculously dressed up in foreign-looking toilettes; loaded with diamonds and jewels like a Hindoo idol, she was the finest pattern of those European

women transplanted in the East, and called Levantines.

A strange race of obese creoles, those Levantines, whose language and costume alone connect them with our world, but which Orient envelops in its stupefying atmosphere with the subtle poisons of its dreamy air, and where everything is loosened and relaxed, from the tissue of the skin to the girths of vestments, to the very thoughts, to the very soul itself.

She was the daughter of a stupendously rich Belgian, who carried on the coral trade at Tunis, and who had employed Jansoulet for some months on his first arrival in the country. Mademoiselle Afchin, who was then a delightful doll of ten, with a dazzling complexion, resplendent hair, and beaming health, often came to her father's factory to fetch him in a big carriage, drawn by mules, which drove them to their beautiful villa of Marsa, in the neighbourhood of Tunis. This girl, always

décolletée, with shining shoulders, dazzled the adventurer, who occasionally saw her thus luxuriously surrounded; and when, years after, become rich and the Bey's favourite, he thought of marrying, it was her he chose. The child had metamorphosed herself into a big, heavy, white girl. Her mind, ever obtuse, had become still more stupefied in the torpor of a life which resembled that of the dormouse. This result was owing to the carelessness of her father, whose mind was absorbed by business, to the use of rose comfits and of tobacco saturated with opium, to the slow course of her Flemish blood, and her Oriental laziness. Moreover, badly brought up, gluttonous, sensual, proud, she was the very perfection of a Levantine plaything. But Jansoulet saw nothing of all that.

For him she was, and always remained, until her arrival in Paris, a superior being, a person of the very best society; in short, a demoiselle Afchin.

He addressed her with respect, was humble and timid before her, gave her money without counting, satisfied her most costly whims, her maddest fancies, all the freaks of a Levantine brain disordered by *ennui* and idleness.

A single word was sufficient excuse for all: she was a demoiselle Afchin. Beyond that, no relations between them: he, always at the Kasbah or at the Bardo—paying his court to the Bey—or in his factories; she, passing her days in bed, wearing a pearl diadem of three hundred thousand francs, which she never quitted, stupefying herself with the smoke of tobacco, living as in a harem, looking at herself in the glass, attiring herself, in the company of other Levantines—whose supreme distraction consisted in measuring with their necklaces their fat arms and legs—now giving birth to children for whom she never cared, whom she never saw, and for whom she had not even suffered—for she used to be delivered under chloroform—a mere parcel of white

flesh, perfumed with musk. But still Jansoulet repeated with pride: 'I have married a demoiselle Afchin.'

Under the sky of Paris, and in its cold light, the disenchantment commenced at once. Resolved to settle down, receive company, and give feasts, the Nabob had sent for his wife to preside over his house; but when he saw her, with that exhibition of loud dresses, loud jewellery, and all the strange paraphernalia which followed, he had a vague vision of an exiled Queen Pomarë. For now he had seen true women of the world, and made comparisons. He had intended to give a great ball, to celebrate her arrival; but now he abstained. Besides, Madame Jansoulet did not wish to receive anyone. Her natural indolence was increased by a nostalgia which the cold, yellow fog and the drizzling rain brought on as soon as she arrived. She passed several days in bed, never rising, crying aloud like a child, saying they had brought her to Paris to kill her, and

not allowing her women to bestow the least attention upon her. She remained there, roaring on her lace pillow, her hair all ruffled around her diadem, the windows of her apartments closed, the curtains shut, the lamps lighted night and day, calling out she 'would —go; would—go.' It was lamentable to see, in that gloomy night, the boxes lying here and there half unpacked, the frightened gazelles, the negresses, sitting on their hams around their mistress and her nervous attacks; groaning too, and looking haggard, like those dogs of Polar travellers which become mad when they cease to perceive the sun.

The Irish doctor introduced to this distressed woman found that he could do no good with his soft ways, his fine phrases, delivered with pouting lips. The Levantine absolutely refused to acquire tone by taking arsenical pearls. The Nabob was in consternation. What must he do? Send her back to Tunis with the children? It was now impos-

sible. He was positively in disfavour there. The Hemerlingues triumphed. One last slight had filled the cup. When Jansoulet left Tunis the Bey had commissioned him to have several millions' worth of gold pieces of a new size struck off at the Paris Mint. Suddenly the order was withdrawn from him and given to Hemerlingue. Thus publicly outraged, Jansoulet retorted by a public manifestation: he offered all his property for sale—his palace at the Bardo, a present of the former Bey; his villa at Marsa, built of white marble, and surrounded by splendid gardens; his large factories, the most sumptuous in the town. He moreover ordered the intelligent Bompain to bring him back his wife and children, as if to emphasise his final departure. After such a rupture it was not an easy thing to go back to Tunis. He tried to make Mademoiselle Afchin understand that; but she only answered him with long groans. He tried to console her, to amuse her; but no distraction could reach that

monstrously apathetic nature. Could he change Paris? Could he give back to the unfortunate Levantine her *patio* with marble flags, where she used to pass hours dozing in the delicious fresh air, listening to the streaming water of the alabaster fountain, with its three basins rising one above the other? Could he give her back her gilt barque with the purple awning, which eight Tripolitan rowers, lithe and strong, rowed, when the sun had set, on the beautiful lake of El Baheira? However rich might be the apartment in the Place Vendôme, it could not compensate for the loss of those marvels. As she thought of that she sank deeper and deeper into her heart-grief. A familiar of the house succeeded nevertheless in rescuing her out of it—Cabassu, the man who wrote on his cards, 'Professor of shampooing,' a big, black, thick-set man, smelling of garlic and pomatum, square-shouldered, with hair up to his eyes, who knew stories of Parisian seraglios,—anecdotes exactly

suited to the intelligence of Madame. He had come once to shampoo her. She wished to see him again, and finally took him into her service. He gave up all his other customers, and became, with a senator's salary, the shampooer of this corpulent person, her page, her reader, her body-guard. Jansoulet, delighted to see his wife pleased, did not seem to see the ridiculous absurdity of that intimacy.

Cabassu was seen at the Bois, in the enormous and sumptuous carriage, by the side of the favourite gazelle—at the theatre, in the back of the boxes which the Levantine engaged;—for she went out now, revived by the treatment of her shampooer, and decided to enjoy herself. She liked the theatre; above all, the farces and melodramas. The apathy of her big body melted in the spurious flare of the footlights. But the place she preferred to all others was Cardailhac's theatre. The Nabob was at home there. From the first ticket-collector to the last box opener, all the staff

belonged to him. He had a key of his own which enabled him to go from the corridors on to the stage. The *salon* of his box, decorated in the Oriental style —its ceiling in the shape of a beehive, its ottomans in camel's hair, the gas burning in a little Moorish lantern— might be utilised for the siesta during the rather long *entr'actes*. This was an act of politeness of the lessee to the wife of the man who found the funds. That monkey of Cardailhac had gone further. Seeing Mademoiselle Afchin's taste for theatrical performances, he had succeeded in persuading her that she possessed also the intuition and science thereof. He therefore begged as a favour that she, in her leisure hours, would kindly peruse and judge the plays which were sent to him. A good way, this, of tightening his hold on the money.

Poor manuscripts, with your blue or yellow covers, which hope has tied with a little ribbon, and which go full of ambition and dreams, who knows what hand opens you, turns over your

leaves; what indiscreet fingers violate your unknown charm, that brilliant dust which sprinkles every new idea? Who judges, who condemns you? Sometimes, before going to his dinner in town, Jansoulet, visiting his wife in her apartment, found her, on a long chair, smoking, her head thrown backward, bundles of manuscripts at her side, and Cabassu, armed with a blue pencil, reading, with his thick voice and his Bourg-Saint-Andéol accent, some dramatic lucubration, which he stroked through, slashed without mercy, on the least adverse criticism of the lady. 'Do not disturb yourselves,' motioned the good Nabob with his hand as he came in on tiptoe. He would listen, nod his admiration to his wife: 'What an astonishing woman!' As for himself he did not understand anything about literature, and there, at least, he acknowledged again Mademoiselle Afchin's superiority.

'She had a theatrical instinct. At least, so said Cardailhac; but, on the other hand, maternal instinct there was none in her. She

never minded her children, left them to the care of strangers, and when, once a month, they were brought to her, she merely held her flabby and inert cheeks for them to kiss, never inquiring into their wants, their health—thus weakening the physical tie which makes true mothers' hearts bleed at the least suffering of their offspring.

They were three big, heavy, lazy boys, aged respectively eleven, nine, and seven, with pale faces, the precocious corpulence of their mother, and the dark, soft, kindly eyes of their father. They were as ignorant as young lords of the Middle Ages. At Tunis, their education had been entrusted to Monsieur Bompain; but in Paris, the Nabob, wishing to procure for them the privilege of a Parisian education, had put them in the most stylish school, the Bourdaloue College, managed by good fathers whose object was not so much to make their pupils clever as to make them correct and right-thinking men of the world, and who only suc-

ceeded in forming little monsters—stiff, ridiculous, hating play, absolutely ignorant, with nothing ingenuous or childlike in them, and horribly precocious.

Jansoulet's sons did not enjoy themselves much in that forcing-house, in spite of the privileges which their large fortune secured for them ;—they were truly too much neglected. The very creoles entrusted to that school went out to their friends and received visits. But they were never called to the parlour, had no friends; only, every now and then, they received baskets full of dainties and pyramids of cakes. The Nabob, in his runs through Paris, looted for their benefit a whole confectioner's shop, and sent his booty to the college with that spontaneousness of feeling not unmixed with the negro-like ostentation, which characterised all his acts. It was the same thing with the playthings which he bought for them: always too fine, too finished, useless, made for show, and which Parisians do not buy. But

what chiefly won them the respect of both pupils and masters was their purses always full of gold, ready for collections and charity visits—those famous visits got up by the Bourdaloue College, which were one of the attractions of their prospectus and the wonder of gentle souls.

The pupils, who were members of the little Society of St. Vincent de Paul, an imitation of the greater society, went twice a month, in turns, in little squads, unattended, like little men, to carry help and consolation to the very ends of populous faubourgs. The object was to teach them practical charity, the art of learning to know the wants; the misery of the poor, of dressing those wounds—always a little sickening—with the balm of good words and ecclesiastical maxims. To console, to evangelise the masses through the instrumentality of childhood, to combat religious unbelief by opposing to it those young and innocent missionaries: such was the object of the little ociety. Unfortunately, that object was a

failure. Those healthy, well-dressed, well-fed children only went to addresses chosen beforehand, and found there good-looking poor—a little unwell sometimes, but very clean—already taken in hand and relieved by the rich organisation of the Church. They never went into any of those sickening abodes where hunger, mourning, meanness—in short, all sorts of physical and moral infirmities—stamp themselves like a leprosy upon the walls, and in indelible wrinkles upon the faces. Their visits were got up, like that of the sovereign going into a guard-room to taste the soldiers' soup. The guard-room is prepared and the soup seasoned for the delicate palate of Royalty. Did you ever see those images in Catholic books of edifying character in which a little fellow is represented ready-dressed for his first communion, with a white-and-gold band round his arm, a wax-candle in his hand, his hair nicely curled, standing by the pallet of a poor old man who turns his eyes upwards? The charity-visits

had the same ring, bore the same stamp of conventional preparedness. To the measured movements of the little preachers' short arms, the poor answered sentences learnt by heart, and as false as brass. To the comical encouragements, to the words of consolation, uttered in the phraseology of religious tracts, by voices which resembled that of young hoarse cocks, the sick replied with showers of blessings, with the moaning and piteous mummeries which waylay you in the porch of a church when vespers are over. But as soon as the young visitors had turned their heels, what peals of laughter, what shouts in the attic, what dances round the alms! The sick overturned the arm-chair on which he had lain, and spilt his tisane into the fire—a fire made of ashes very artistically prepared.

When the little Jansoulets came to see their parents, they were placed undert he guard of the man with the red fez, the indispensable Bompain. Bompain it was who took them

to the Champs Elysées, dressed in English jackets, wearing fashionable hats—at seven!—little sticks in their hands, and their hands in dogskin gloves. It was again Bompain who, on race days, stuffed the break with victuals, and drove with the children, their tickets stuck in their hats, and their hats wrapped round with green veils, reminding one of those personages in Liliputian pantomimes which are comical only because the volume of their heads contrasts with the smallness of their legs and their dwarfish movements. They smoked, they drank!—it was pitiful to see! Sometimes the man with the fez, barely able to keep on his own legs, brought them home frightfully ill. For all that Jansoulet loved his children, the second especially, who reminded him, with his long hair and doll-like looks, of the little Afchin girl when she used to pass in her carriage. But they were still at an age when children belong to the mother; when neither the fashionable tailor, nor the accomplished mas-

ters, nor the swell boarding school, nor the ponies saddled in the stable for the little men, when nothing, in short, makes up for a mother's careful and attentive hand, for the warmth and comfort of the nest. It was not the father who could give them that; besides, he was so much occupied! A thousand affairs drew his attention—the *Caisse Territoriale*, his gallery of pictures, drives to Tattersall with Bois-Landry, some curiosity to inspect here or there, in the collection of some amateur mentioned by Schwalbach, whole hours passed with horse-trainers, jockeys, in old curiosity shops—the overcrowded and many-sided existence of a *bourgeois gentilhomme* in modern Paris. By rubbing himself continually against so many and various people he acquired every day a little more of the Parisian polish; he was admitted into Monpavon's club, in the green-room among the dancers, behind the stage; and besides that, he continued to preside at those famous bachelors' breakfasts, the only recep-

tions possible in his house. His life was really very full, although de Géry freed him from his most arduous task—the complicated department of demands for help.

It was now the young man's business to inquire in his stead into all the bold and burlesque inventions, into all the heroi-comical combinations of that mendicity of a great town, which has an organisation like that of a ministry, is innumerable like an army, reads the public papers and knows the directory by heart. He received the fair-haired lady, bold-looking, young but already faded, who only asks for one hundred louis, with the threat that she will drown herself on leaving if they are not forthwith given to her; and the stout matron, with an engaging face and blunt manner, who says as she walks in, 'Sir, you don't know me. I have not the honour of knowing you either, but we shall soon become acquainted. Sit down, and let us talk'; the despairing tradesman on the eve of bankruptcy—it is

sometimes true—who implores you to save him from dishonour, ready to shoot himself with a pistol which you see swelling out his pocket—a true pistol sometimes, and not always his pipe-case. The distress is often true, fatiguing and prolix, related by people who have not even the talent of explaining properly how ill-fitted they are to make a living. Side by side with this open mendicity was that other mendicity which takes a disguise—takes the name of some charity, philanthropy, private benevolence, artistic encouragements, collections for infant schools, the wants of the parish, homes for fallen women, benevolent societies, people's libraries, &c. Lastly, came the mendicity which wears a worldly mask: tickets for concerts, theatricals, benefits, cards of all colours—body of the hall, first gallery, reserved seats. The Nabob would not allow any demand to be refused; but there was progress in so far that he did not look to them personally. He had, long enough and with generous indifference,

fed with gold that hypocritical sponging, paying five hundred francs a ticket for the concert of some Würtemberg citharist or of some Languedoc flute-player, which at the Tuileries or at the Duc de Mora's would have fetched ten francs. Some days young de Géry felt sick at heart. All his youthful uprightness rebelled. He tried to induce the Nabob to introduce some reform in that frightful waste. But he, at the first word spoken, looked tired and weary, like weak men when they have to make up their minds; or else he answered, with a shrug of his broad shoulders, 'But, my dear boy, that is Paris. Don't be frightened; leave that to me. I know where I am going to, and what I want.' He wanted two things: to be a *député*, and to get the Cross. These were the two first stages up the hill whither his ambition carried him. A *député* he would certainly be, through the *Caisse Territoriale*, at the head of which he found himself. Paganetti, of Porto-Vecchio, often said to him, 'When

the day comes the Island will rise and vote for you like one man.' But it is not enough to have electors; a seat must also be vacant in the Chamber, and the contingent of Corsica's representatives was complete. Nevertheless, one of them, old Popolasco, a sickly man, unable to accomplish his task, might be induced to resign on certain conditions. This was a delicate matter to treat of, but not impossible; for that gentleman had a numerous family, an estate which did not bring him two per cent., a palace in ruins at Bastia, where his children fed on polenta, and in Paris furnished lodgings of the eighteenth class. If the Nabob did not mind paying one hundred or two hundred thousand francs, this honourable starveling might be brought round. He had been sounded by Paganetti, and said neither yes nor no, seduced by the plump sum, stopped by his vanity. Such was the state of affairs, and the thing might be decided any day.

With respect to the Cross everything went on better still. Bethlehem had certainly made a great sensation at the Tuileries. They only waited for the visit of Monsieur de la Perrière and his report, which could not but be favourable, to put down on the list of the 16th of March—an Imperial anniversary—the glorious name of Jansoulet. The 16th of March; that is to say, ere a month was over! What would fat Hemerlingue say to that signal favour, he who had for such a long time back been obliged to be satisfied with the Nisham? and the Bey, whom they had gulled into the belief that Jansoulet was not received in Parisian society? and the old mother at St. Romans, always so happy at her son's success? Was not all that worth the few millions skilfully squandered, abandoned to the birds of prey on the road to glory, which the Nabob trod like a child, careless of being devoured at the end; and was there not, in these worldly joys, these honours, that deference so

dearly bought, a compensation for all the disappointments of that Oriental, brought back to European life, who wished for a home, and had only a caravansary, who sought a wife, and only found a Levantine?

CHAPTER VIII.

BETHLEHEM.

BETHLEHEM! Why did that legendary and sweet name, warm like the straw of the miraculous stable, produce a cold impression on men's hearts when they read it written in gold letters over that iron gate? It might arise from the melancholy landscape, that immense, sad plain which goes from Nanterre to Saint-Cloud, relieved only by a few clumps of trees or the smoke of a few manufacturing works; perhaps also from the contrast between the humble village name and the splendid establishment—a villa built, in the style of Louis XIII., in agglomerate concrete, which appeared full of rosy tints in that park, with its bare trees and its lakes thick with green mosses.

One thing is certain, that if anyone passed there he felt a chill at heart. If he went in it was far worse. A dull, inexplicable silence reigned in that house; and the faces which appeared at the windows, behind those old-fashioned little green panes, all wore a dismal look. The suckling goats you met in the alleys nibbled languidly at the new shoots, and uttered their tremulous 'ba' towards their weary keeper who watched the visitors with mournful eyes. Mourning hovered there, like the solitude and dread of some contagion. Yet it had formerly been a merry house, full of broad revelry. Repaired and done up for the celebrated songstress who had sold it to Jenkins, it displayed the taste peculiar to lyric theatres—a bridge thrown across a lake, the leaking boat half full of mouldering leaves, a pavilion built in rockery, and girt with ivy. What strange scenes that pavilion had witnessed in the dancer's days, and what sad scenes it witnessed now—for they had turned it into an infirmary!

To speak candidly the whole place was one huge infirmary. As soon as the children arrived they fell ill, pined away, and presently died, unless their parents took them quickly back again under the protection of their homes. The curé of Nanterre went so often to Bethlehem, with his black vestments and his silver cross; the undertaker had so many orders for the house, that the people knew it in the country round, and indignant mothers showed their fists to the model nursery; but from a prudent distance, if they had a white and rosy baby of their own, and wished to save it from all the contagious diseases of the place. That is what gave such a melancholy aspect to the poor abode. A house where children die is not a merry place, and does not permit you to notice the blossoms on the trees, the birds' nests in the branches, the running water's foaming laugh.

There could be no longer any doubts about it. Jenkins' charity, excellent so far as its aims

were concerned, was of difficult, not to say impossible, application. And yet God only knows what care and zeal had been bestowed to the least details. Neither men nor money had been wanting. At the head of the house was a manager, Monsieur Pondevèz, a clever practitioner, who had long frequented the hospitals; next to him, Madame Polge, the trusty housekeeper, for more delicate cares. Then came servants, laundresses, sick-nurses. The latest improvements were there, from the water—distributed everywhere by fifty taps—down to the omnibus, with its coachman in the Bethlehem livery, going to the Rueil station to meet the day trains, and tinkling all its bells on the way. Lastly, there were splendid goats, Thibet goats, silky and full of milk. The organisation left nothing to be desired; but there was a hitch somewhere nevertheless. That artificial nursing, so praised up in puff-articles, did not agree with the children. A strange obstinacy on their part, a sort of watchword which they

passed from one to the other, with a wink, no doubt, for the poor little pussies could not speak yet—most of them would never speak at all—and which plainly meant, 'If you like, we won't suck the goats.' And they did not suck the goats; they preferred dying one after another rather than suck the goats. Was Jesus of Bethlehem, in His stable, fed by goats? Did not He press, on the contrary, a woman's breast, sweet and full, on which He fell asleep, when He had quenched His thirst? Who ever saw a goat between the legendary ox and ass during that night when beasts spoke? Why this lie, then? Why call this house Bethlehem?

The manager had at first been shocked at so many victims. A waif from the Quartier Latin, a twenty years' student, Pondevèz, well known at all the liquor-shops of the Boulevard Saint-Michel, by the name of Pompon, was far from being a bad fellow. When he saw the little success of the artificial nursing, he quietly engaged four or five strong women as wet-

nurses, and immediately the children recovered their appetite. This touch of humanity was near costing him his post.

'Wet-nurses at Bethlehem!' said Jenkins, furious, when he paid his weekly visit. 'Are you mad? What, then, is the use of our goats, of our swards to nourish them? And my idea, and my pamphlets on my idea! What becomes of all that? You work contrary to my system, you rob the founder's money, you——'

'But, my dear sir,' the student tried to answer, as he passed his hands in his red beard; 'but since they won't take that food——'

'Well, sir? Let them fast, then; but respect the principle of artificial nursing. All is there. Let me not have to repeat it to you. Dismiss those frightful nurses. We have to rear our children on goat's milk—cow's milk, if it becomes absolutely necessary; but I cannot go farther than that.'

He added, with his would-be-Apostle look: 'We are here to prove the truth of a great

philanthropic idea. That idea must triumph, even at the price of a few sacrifices. See to it.'

Pondevèz did not insist. After all, the place was good, near enough to Paris to permit his friends of the 'Quartier' to visit him on Sundays at Nanterre, or to enable the manager himself to make a flying call at his own haunts, the 'brasseries.' Madame Polge—Jenkins used to call her 'our intelligent overseer,' and, in fact, he had put her where she was to oversee everything, and first of all the manager himself—was not so severe as her functions might have induced you to believe, and she easily succumbed to the temptation of a few glasses of cognac, or a game of fifteen hundred bezique. Therefore, the manager dismissed all the nurses, and steeled himself against anything that might happen. And what happened? A veritable Massacre of the Innocents! A few parents in easier circumstances, working men or small traders, who had been induced by the advertisements to part from their children, took them

home again quickly, and there did not remain in the establishment any others than unfortunate babies, picked up under some porch or other, or in out-of-the-way places, and sent here by the hospitals—children destined from their birth to all possible evils. As the mortality continued to increase, even those began to fail, and the omnibus, which went to meet the train as sedate as a post-chaise, came back light and bounding like an empty hearse. How long would that last? How long would the twenty-five or thirty little fellows who remained be, before they died? Such was the question which the manager, or rather the registrar of deaths, Pondevèz, was asking himself one fine morning, as he sat after breakfast having a game with the venerable Madame Polge.

'Yes, my dear Madame Polge, what will become of us? It cannot last long like this. Jenkins will not yield, the babies are obstinate like mules. It's of no use; they will all slip between our fingers. Look at the little

Wallachian—I mark the king, Madame Polge —he may die any moment. Just fancy the poor little man, with nothing in his stomach for three days! Jenkins may say what he likes; you cannot improve children as you do snails, by making them fast. It is really frightful! We cannot save a single one. The infirmary is cram full. 'Pon my soul, the whole thing has an ugly look!—Bezique!'

A double ring at the entrance-gate interrupted his monologue. The omnibus was returning from the station, and its wheels creaked on the sand in quite an unusual way.

'Strange!' said Pondevèz. 'The omnibus is not empty.' In fact, it came as far as the porch with a certain pride, and a man, who got out of it, rushed up the stairs. It was Jenkins' messenger, who was bringing great news. The Doctor, the Nabob, and a gentleman from the Tuileries, would arrive in two hours to visit the home. Everything must be got ready to receive them. The thing had been settled so

quickly that Jenkins had not had time to write. But he relied on Monsieur Pondevèz to do what was necessary.

'It is all very fine with his "necessary,"' muttered Pondevèz, quite scared. The moment was critical. That important visit fell at the worst of times, when the system was actually breaking down. Poor puzzled Pompon pulled at his beard and chewed little twigs.

'Come on,' said he all at once to Madame Polge, whose face was getting longer between her bows. 'We have only one thing to do. We must transport all our little patients from the infirmary to the dormitory. It will do them neither good nor harm to be brought here again for half a day. As for those who have got the rash, we will shove them into some corner. They are too ugly; we must not show them. Come, now. Quick! All hands up!'

The dinner-bell being lustily rung, steps were heard hurrying everywhere—laundresses, sick nurses, dry nurses, servants come from

every nook, run about, knock against each other on the stairs, through the yard, everywhere. Orders, shouts, and calls, cross each other; and above all that uproar, is heard the noise of a great scrubbing, of running water, as if Bethlehem had been surprised by fire—and the moans of sick children, snatched away from their warm beds, all those little bellowing parcels, carried through the damp park, with their blankets catching the branches, complete that impression of a fire. After two hours, thanks to tremendous efforts, the house is ready from top to bottom for the visit which it is about to receive. All the staff are at their posts, the stove is lighted, and the goats graze picturesquely all through the park. Madame Polge has put on her green silk dress; the manager's clothes do not present the same careless appearance as usual, yet their simplicity excludes the idea of previous preparation. The Secretary of her Majesty's commands may come. And lo! there he is. He alights with Jenkins and Jansoulet out of a splendid coach,

driven by a coachman in the red and gold livery of the Nabob. With an expression of great astonishment, Pondevèz rushes forward to meet his visitors.

'Ha! Monsieur Jenkins. This honour! What a surprise!'

There is an exchange of bows in the porch, hands shaken, introductions made. Jenkins, with his floating overcoat wide open on his loyal chest, smiles his best and most cordial smile. Nevertheless, his brows are knit with significant uneasiness. He dreads the surprises which the home may have in store for them; for he knows better than any one the misery of the place. Heaven grant that Pondevèz may have taken proper precautions! It begins well: the somewhat theatrical display of the entrance, the white goats bounding through the brushwood, have delighted Monsieur de la Perrière, who himself résembles a goat escaped from the stake to which she was tied, with his innocent eyes, his white imperial, and the continual nodding of his head.

'This, gentlemen, is the most important room in the house: it is the nursery,' says the manager, opening a massive door at the end of the antechamber. The gentlemen follow him, go down a few steps, and find themselves in an immense, low, flagged room, the former kitchen of the château. The first thing that strikes one on going in is a high and broad chimney, of an old style, in red bricks, with two stone benches facing each other under the mantel-piece, the coat-of-arms of the singer—an enormous lyre barred with a roll of music—sculptured on the monumental front.

The effect is startling; but there comes a terrible draught, which, joined to the cold flags of the floor, to the dull light falling from the sky-light, frightens for the comfort of the children. But it could not be helped. They had to put the nursery in this unwholesome place, because of the rural and capricious manners of the goats, accustomed to great freedom in their stable. The sight of the milk pools,

the big red stains drying on the flagged floor, the sharp smell which seizes you on first coming in—a mixture of sour milk, damp air, and many things besides—suffice to convince one of this absolute necessity.

The walls were so dark-looking that the visitors thought at first the nursery was empty. Nevertheless, quite at the end, could be distinguished a lively baaing and moaning group: two country-women, with hard, brutal, clayey faces—dry nurses, who thoroughly deserved their names—are seated on mats, with each a baby in her arms, each having before her a big goat with swollen teats and legs apart. The manager appears happily surprised. 'Well, gentlemen, this is lucky! here are two of our children about to take their little lunch; we shall see how both nurses and nurselings manage.'

'What is the matter with the fellow? He must be mad,' says Jenkins, terrified, to himself.

But the manager knows very well what he is about. He has himself cleverly prepared the

scene, chosen two patient and gentle animals, and two exceptional babies, lusty little fellows, who insist on living at any price, and open their mouths to all kinds of food, like little birds in their nest.

'Come near, gentlemen, and see for yourselves. They are really sucking, the cherubs!' One of them, gathered up under the goat, sets so heartily to his task, that you can hear the gurgling of the warm milk as it goes down to the little fellow's legs, kicking with satisfaction. The other, of a calmer mood, lazily stretched on his back, has need of a little encouragement from his Auvergnat nurse.

'Suck then, suck away, you little beggar!'

Presently, as if he had suddenly made up his mind, he begins to suck with such lustiness, that the woman bends over him, quite surprised at that extraordinary appetite, and at last cries out laughing:

'Oh, the little rogue! How clever of him! It's his thumb he's sucking, instead of the teat.'

Yes, the little angel had found out that dodge to be left alone. The incident does not look bad. On the contrary, Monsieur de la Perrière is vastly amused with the nurse's idea, that the child was trying to play them a trick. He leaves the nursery in great glee.

'I am delighted, de—lighted!' he repeats, with a jerk of his head, as he goes up the wide stairs, with resounding walls and decorated with antlers, which lead to the dormitory.

This immense, well-lighted, well-aired room, occupies a whole side of the house, and has many windows. At long intervals, there are cradles hung with curtains, as fleecy and white as clouds. Between the rows of cradles, women go and come with piles of linen on their arms, keys in their hands. They are the overseers, the bed-makers. Here everything is too well prepared, and the first impression of the visitors is not a good one. All this white muslin, this polished floor, on which the light spreads without diffusing itself, the brightness of the

windows, which reflect a sky saddened at the sight of these things, bring out all the stronger the leanness, the sickly paleness of these little moribunds, as white as shrouds. Alas! the eldest are only six months old, the youngest barely a fortnight; and already, upon all those faces, those embryo faces, there is a doleful expression, an old wrinkled look, a stamp of precocious suffering, visible in the numerous folds of those small, bald foreheads, ensconced in caps bordered with thin common lace.

What is the matter with them?

What is the matter? everything is the matter, everything—children's ailments and men's diseases, both. Born of vice and misery, they bring with them into this world hideous hereditary stains; one has a perforated palate, another large coppery spots on his forehead; all have the thrush; and as if that were not enough, they are dying of hunger. In spite of the spoonfuls of milk, in spite of the sugared water introduced by force

into their mouths, in spite of the sucking-bottle, used contrary to orders, the little things are starving. These little children, exhausted before their birth, required the youngest and strongest food. The goats might have given it them, but they refuse to suck the goats. And that is why the dormitory is gloomy and silent, without even a little burst of anger, in which a child tries his breath and his strength, clenches his little fists, and roars till he shows his rosy and smooth gums; here is hardly heard a plaintive moan, like the uneasiness of a soul, which turns in every direction in a little sickly body, without finding any place in which to rest.

Jenkins and the manager, perceiving the bad effect which the visit to the dormitory produces upon their guests, try to enliven the situation, speak very loud, in an off-hand way, jauntily, and like men who are satisfied. Jenkins shakes hands with the housekeeper.

'Well, Madame Polge, how are your little charges?'

'As you see, Doctor,' says she, showing the beds.

She has a gloomy look, in her green dress, that tall Madame Polge, the ideal of dry nurses. She completes the picture.

But where is the Secretary of her Majesty's commands?

There he is, standing before a cradle, which he examines with many jerks of his head.

'By Jove!' says Pompon to Madame Polge, 'it is the Wallachian.'

The little blue label, hanging over the cradle, just as in hospitals, proclaims, indeed, the nationality of the child: 'Moldo-Wallachian.' What a pity the Secretary's attention should have been drawn precisely to that one! Look at the poor little head lying on its pillow, its little cap awry, its nostrils pinched, its mouth half open, through which passes a short and panting breath, the breath of the new-born and the dying!

'Is he ill?' asked softly the Secretary of the manager, who has drawn near.

'Not at all,' answers the shameless Pompon. And approaching the cradle, he chucks him with his finger, smooths the pillow, and says with a loud voice, gruff, but good-natured: 'Well, old fellow!' Shaken out of his torpor, leaving the shadow which already surrounds him, the child opens his eyes and looks with mournful indifference at the faces which are bent over him; then, returning to his dream which he finds prettier, he clenches his little wrinkled hands, and heaves an imperceptible sigh. Mystery! Who shall tell what he had come into this life for, poor little fellow? Suffer two months, and then pass away without having seen anything, understood anything, the very sound of his voice unknown to all!

'How pale he is!' whispers Monsieur de la Perrière, very pale himself. The Nabob is livid also. A cold breath has just crossed the room.

The manager assumes an easy way:

'It is the light. We all look green here.'

'Yes, so we do,' says Jenkins. 'It is the reflection of light from the water. Come and see, Monsieur le Secrétaire. And he takes him towards the window, to show him the lake in which willows dip their branches; and Madame Polge hastens to draw the curtains of the cradle over the everlasting dream of the little Wallachian.

They hasten quickly to the other parts of the establishment, in order to destroy this uncomfortable impression.

They first take Monsieur de la Perrière to a splendid laundry—stoves, drying rooms, thermometers, huge cupboards, in polished walnut, full of caps and bandages, labelled and tied a dozen together. When the linen is warmed, the laundress passes it through a little wicket, and in exchange receives a counter from the nurse. As can be seen, there is admirable order here; and everything, even to the smell of the suds, gives to this room a

healthy, country look. Here is linen enough to clothe five hundred children. Bethlehem can contain that number, and everything has been calculated on that scale—the large dispensary, full of shining bottles and Latin inscriptions, marble pestles in every corner—the bathing room, with its large stone basins, its clean baths, its gigantic apparatus, crossed with tubes of all sizes which convey the water for douches, shower baths, &c.—the kitchens, with rows of bright brass saucepans hung up according to size, improved stoves, heated with charcoal or gas. Jenkins wanted a model 'Home,' and it was an easy thing for him to get it. The work was done regardless of expense, as there was plenty of money. The experienced and directing hand of the intelligent housekeeper could be traced everywhere, and the manager could not but render her this public homage. This was the signal for general congratulation—Monsieur de la Perrière, delighted at the scale on which everything has

been done, congratulates Dr. Jenkins on his grand idea, Jenkins congratulates his friend Pondevèz, who in his turn expresses his thanks to the Secretary for his condescension in visiting Bethlehem. The good Nabob adds his voice to that concert of praise, finds an amiable word for each, though he is a little astonished that they do not congratulate him also whilst they are about it. It is true the best kind of congratulation awaits him on the 16th of March, in the *Journal Officiel*, in a decree which already shines before his mind's eye, and actually makes him cast a side glance towards his button-hole.

They were in a long corridor when exchanging those fine words with a tone of great sincerity; but all at once a frightful noise interrupts the conversation and the walk of the visitors. It sounds like the mewing of delirious cats, like bellowing, like the howls of wild Indians round the stake of death—a terrible tempest of human cries repercuted, swollen

and prolonged by the sonorous arches. It rises, sinks, stops suddenly, and begins afresh with strange *ensemble*. The manager looks uneasy, makes inquiries. Jenkins turns his eyes, wild with suppressed anger.

'Let us go on,' says the manager, with a little confusion; 'I know what it is.'

If he knows what it is, the Secretary wants to know it also; and he pushes open the massive door, from behind which comes that horrible concert, before Pondevèz has time to interfere.

In a room as sordid as a kennel, and which the great scrubbing has left untouched, for it was not intended to be shown, lie some ten little monsters, stretched on mattresses on the floor, presided over by an empty chair, on which is a piece of knitting, and by a little broken pot, full of wine, boiling on a smoking wood fire. All these have the mumps and scurvy—the shame of Bethlehem. They have been hidden in that discreet corner, with a strong injunction to the nurse to rock them,

keep them quiet, and, if need be, sit down upon them, to prevent them from crying; but this peasant woman, unintelligent and curious, has left her post to pay a visit to the fine coach waiting in the yard. Behind her, the babies soon became tired of their horizontal position, and began their concert; for all those little scabby brats, scarlet, and covered with eruptions, are, by a sort of miracle, in robust health. Their scrofula saves them and nourishes them. Wild and contorted, like cockchafers on their backs, they use their haunches, their elbows, to help themselves. Some, who had fallen on one side, could not recover their balance; others raised straight up their small, swaddled-up, benumbed legs. When they saw the door open, they spontaneously stopped their cries; but the jerking beard of Monsieur de la Perrière reassured them, and cheered them up to renewed exertions; so that, in the increasing row, the manager's explanation is hardly heard: 'Chil-

dren secluded from others—contagious diseases —cutaneous——' The Secretary asks no more. Of a less heroic mould than Napoleon visiting his plague-stricken soldiers at Jaffa, he rushes to the door, and, in his tremulousness, trying to say something and finding nothing, he murmurs with an ineffable smile:

'They are char—charming!'

But now the visit is over. Behold them all seated in the ground-floor saloon, where Madame Polge has prepared luncheon for them. The cellars of Bethlehem are well stocked. The sharp air of the plain, the walks up and down the stairs, have given the gentleman from the Tuileries such an appetite as he had not known for a long time; consequently, he chats and laughs with country-like familiarity, and when the time has come to depart, and all are standing, he lifts up his glass and nods his head:

'I drink to the prosperity of Bethlehem,' says he.

Great emotion ! They touch glasses. Then at a rapid trot, the coach drives away through the long linden avenue, at the end of which the red, cold sun is setting. Behind them the park resumes its mournful silence. Large dark masses gather behind the brushwood, surround the house, encroach by degrees on the walks and 'rond-points.' Very soon there remains no other lighted spot than the ironical letters over the gates, and further, at a window on the first floor, a red and flickering spot, the gleam of a candle lighted at the bedside of a dead child.

'By a decree of March the 12th, 1865, on the Minister of the Interior's proposal, Doctor Jenkins, President and founder of the '*Œuvre de Bethléem*,' is named a Knight of the Imperial Order of the Legion of Honour. Great devotion to the cause of humanity.'

When, on the 16th of March, the poor Nabob read those lines in the first page of the *Journal Officiel*, he became dizzy.

'Was this possible?'

Jenkins decorated, and not he!

He read the words twice over, believing his sight deceived him. He heard a noise in his ears. The letters looked double, and danced before his eyes with those red circles which they take in the sun. He had felt so sure he would find his name on that page! Why, Jenkins, no later than the day before, had affirmed that the thing was done! There must be some mistake. No; it was indeed Jenkins' name. The shock was great, deep, prophetic—like a first warning of fate—all the more keenly felt that, for years, that man was unused to disappointments, lived above humanity. Every part of him that was good learnt in a trice a lesson of distrust.

'Well!' said he to de Géry, who came as usual into his room, and surprised him, greatly moved, still holding the *Journal Officiel* in his hand. 'You have seen—I am not in the *Officiel?*'

He tried to smile, his face swollen like that of a child who strives to restrain his tears; then,

all at once, with that openness of disposition which was so pleasant in him :

'I feel this very much,' said he. 'I had relied so much upon it.'

The door opened on these words. In rushed Jenkins, excited, out of breath, stammering :

'It is infamous ! This cannot be, shall *not* be !'

Words trembled confusedly on his lips, all trying to come out together ; then he appeared to be unable to express his thoughts, and threw on the table a little shagreen box and a large envelope, both bearing the stamp of the Chancery.

'Here are my cross and my brevet. They are yours, my friend. I cannot keep them !'

In reality, all this bluster signified little. If Jansoulet had put on Jenkins' ribbon, he would certainly have been condemned for wearing the decoration illegally. But a *coup de théâtre* is not bound to be logical. Then followed mutual protestations, shakes of the hand, a generous struggle, at the end of which Jenkins put

those objects back into his pocket, saying that he would protest, write to the papers, &c.

The Nabob was obliged to stop him:

'Do not do anything of the sort. In the first place, it might injure me for the next time. Who knows? Perhaps on the 15th of August next ——

'Oh, as for that,' said Jenkins, catching at the idea, and holding out his arm, as in David's picture of the 'Oath,' 'I most solemnly swear ——'

The matter went no farther. At breakfast the Nabob spoke of nothing, and appeared as merry as usual. His good humour did not leave him the whole day, and de Géry, for whom that scene had been a revelation with respect to the true Jenkins, and a commentary of Felicia Ruys' scorn and anger whenever she addressed the Doctor, was vainly trying to find some method of enlightening his employer on so much hypocrisy. He might have known that *méridionals*, men of impulse though they be, are never

completely blind, and learn wisdom from reflection. During the evening the Nabob had opened a wretched little portfolio, dog-eared, where for the last ten years he wrote down his millions in hieroglyphics which he alone understood—in fact, kept his account of profits and losses. He had been absorbed for a few moments in his accounts, when, turning to de Géry,

'Do you know what I am doing, dear Paul?' he asked.

'No, sir.'

'I am calculating'—and as he said this his meaning eyes seemed to belie his good-natured smile—'that I have paid four hundred and thirty thousand francs to obtain the decoration for Jenkins.'

Four hundred and thirty thousand francs! And it was not all, by any means.

CHAPTER IX.

BONNE-MAMAN.

THREE times a week Paul de Géry went in the evening to take lessons in book-keeping in Monsieur Joyeuse's dining-room, not far from the little drawing-room where the young girls had appeared to him on his first visit; and while his eyes were fixed on his white-tied professor, and he was being initiated into the mysteries of 'credit and debit,' he would, in spite of himself, listen to the noise of the busy evening chat behind the door, and think with regret of the vision of all those pretty heads bent under the lamp. Monsieur Joyeuse never said one word about his daughters. Jealously watching over them, as a dragon does over fair princesses shut up in a tower, ever excited

by the exaggerated pictures of his fantastic imagination, he used to answer very dryly to the questions of his pupil, inquiring about 'ces demoiselles,' so that, presently, the young man ceased altogether to talk about them. But he was astonished at not having once met that 'bonne-maman' whose name kept cropping up in the speeches of Monsieur Joyeuse; for the least details of her existence were impressed upon the house, and were, so to speak, the emblem of her perfect management and calmness.

So much reserve respecting a venerable dame, whose age must surely place her above the daring enterprises of young men, appeared exaggerated to him. But, after all, the lessons were good, clearly given, and the professor's method was excellent. There was only one drawback—Monsieur Joyeuse would have fits of abstraction, out of which he emerged with sudden starts, which went off like fuses. With that exception, the best of masters, intelligent, patient, and upright. Paul was beginning to

find his way in that complicated labyrinth of commercial books, and he had made up his mind not to ask for anything more.

One evening, about nine o'clock, when the young man was rising to go, Monsieur Joyeuse asked him if he would do him the honour of taking a cup of tea with his family—a habit which dated from poor Madame Joyeuse, *née* de Saint-Amand, who in her time used to receive her friends every Thursday. Since her death, their fortunes had changed, their friends had ceased to come; but yet they had kept up this little 'weekly extra.' Paul having accepted the invitation, the good man opened the door, and called: 'Bonne-maman!'

They heard a quick step in the passage, and immediately after a face of twenty, surrounded with thick fine brown hair, made its appearance. De Géry, stupefied, looked inquiringly at Monsieur Joyeuse:

'Bonne-maman?'

'Yes, we gave her that name when she was

quite small. She had such a queer, old-fashioned face, in her frilled cap, and with her eldest-child authority—we thought she resembled her grandmamma, and so the name stuck to her.'

By the tone of the good man, as he thus spoke, you at once felt that the name of 'granny,' given to such a blooming girl, was a thing perfectly natural. Every one in the family thought as he did on that point—the other girls, who had run to their father, and grouped themselves very much as they were in the outside frame; the old servant who put on the table of the drawing-room, whither they had just passed, a magnificent tea-service, a waif of former splendour—everybody called the young girl 'Bonne-maman.' And she did not mind it. The influence of that blessed name gave to their affection a deference which flattered her, as it gave to her ideal authority a tone of gentle protection.

Whether it was owing to that ancestral title which de Géry had learnt to love from his earliest childhood, or to some other feeling, I

do not presume to decide; but certain it is that he found an inexpressible charm in that young girl. What he experienced did not at all resemble the sudden heart-shock which another woman had occasioned him—a feeling of confusion, mixed with a desire to fly away, to escape a sort of bewitchery; the persistent melancholy which, on the morrow, follows a day of revelry; a dull sensation of extinguished tapers, vanished songs, perfumes dispersed through the night. No; before that young girl, standing there, looking on the table to see if nothing was forgotten, lowering her affectionate eyes on her young children, he was seized with the temptation to know more of her, to become an old friend of hers, to whisper to her heart things which he only confessed to himself; and when she offered him his cup, without any coquetry or drawing-room graces, he wished he could have said to her, as the others did, 'Thank you, Bonne-maman,' and poured all his heart in those words.

Suddenly a strong joyful knock at the door startled everybody.

'Here is Monsieur André! Elise, a cup, quick! . . . Yaïa, the cakes!' In the meantime, Mademoiselle Henriette, Joyeuse's third daughter, who had inherited from her mother —*née* Saint-Amand, remember—something worldly in her disposition, seeing the affluence on that night in the drawing-room, rushed quickly to light the two piano tapers.

'My fifth act is finished,' cried the newcomer from the door—then he stopped suddenly: 'I beg pardon,' said he; and his face assumed a somewhat abashed expression, on seeing the stranger. Monsieur Joyeuse introduced them to each other: 'Monsieur Paul de Géry—Monsieur André Maranne!' with a certain pomposity of manner. He remembered his wife's receptions; and the vases on the chimney-piece, the two big lamps, the what-not, the armchairs in a circle, seemed to share the good man's illusion, for they looked more

brilliant and youthful among this unusual gathering.

'Then your play is finished?'

'Finished! Monsieur Joyeuse, and I shall read it to you one of these evenings.'

'Do, Monsieur André, do,' said the chorus of young girls.

The neighbour was working for the theatre, and nobody here doubted his success. But, on the other hand, photography did not hold out promises of great profits. Customers were rare, passers-by showed no inclination to patronise him. To keep his hand in, and preserve his new apparatus free from rust, Monsieur André took every Sunday all this family of friends, who submitted with unequalled patience to his experiments; for the prosperity of this suburban and trading studio was for all of them a matter of *amour propre*; it even awoke in the young girls that touching sympathy which binds humble destinies together, like sparrows on the edge of a roof. André Maranne, with the inexhaustible

resource of his wide forehead full of illusions, explained without bitterness the indifference of the public. Sometimes, the season was unfavourable, or people complained of the bad state of trade; and he always ended with this consoling burden: 'Wait till I have had my *Révolte* played.' *Révolte* was the title of his drama.

'It is strange, though,' said the fourth Demoiselle Joyeuse—aged twelve years, hair *à la chinoise*—'it is strange that there should be so little business done with such a fine balcony.'

'And the neighbourhood is crowded with passers-by,' added Elise, with confidence.

Bonne-maman calls her attention to the fact that the Boulevard des Italiens is still more so.

'Ah! if he were on the Boulevard des Italiens,' says Monsieur Joyeuse, dreamily; and off he goes on his hobby; when all at once he comes to a full stop, awakened by a sad motion of his own, and these words, which he pronounces with lamentable intonation: 'Closed by reason of bankruptcy.' In one minute the

terrible dreamer had seen his friend settling in splendid apartments on the boulevard—he makes enormous sums, increases his expenses to such a degree that his stupendous debts swallow up in a very few months both photographer and photography. They laugh a good deal when he gives this explanation; but they agree that, though less brilliant than the Boulevard des Italiens, the Rue Ferdinand is perhaps a safer quarter. Besides that, is it not situated near the Bois de Boulogne?—and if fashionable society once begins to pass this way . . . This fashionable society, of which her mother was so fond, is Henriette's hobby, and she is astonished that their neighbour should laugh at the idea of receiving fine people in his little fifth-floor apartment, as narrow as a bell-glass. And yet, the other week, there came a fine carriage with a liveried coachman. This afternoon, also, he has had a very 'swell' visit.

'Oh, quite a grand lady,' says Bonne-maman. 'We were at the window, and

saw her alight from her carriage and look at the frame. We guessed it was for you.'

'It was for me,' says André, a little embarrassed.

'One moment we feared lest she should pass on like so many others, because of your five stories. But we were there, staring at her, and drawing her in, without her suspecting it, with the magnet of our four pairs of eyes wide open. We kept drawing her gently, by the feathers of her bonnet and the lace of her pelisse. "Come in, madame, come in," we said; so that at last she did come in. Yes, there is a strong magnet, I am sure, in willing eyes.'

Magnet the dear creature certainly had, not only in her eyes of an undecided colour, veiled or laughing like the sky of her own Paris, but also in her voice, in the folds of her dress, and even in the long ringlet prettily turned on her supple finger, which fell attractively on a neck as straight and finely cut as that of a statuette.

Monsieur Joyeuse was always very long in everything he did, because of his sudden journeys to the clouds; and so, whilst the gentlemen talked and sipped their tea, the young girls took up their work, and the table became covered with little wicker baskets, embroidery, skeins of pretty Berlin wool, which, by their brilliant colours, seemed to give new life to the faded pattern of the table cover; and the group of the other evening gathered again in the circle of light projected by the lamp shade, to the great rejoicing of Paul de Géry. It was the first evening of the kind he was passing in Paris. It reminded him of many others far away in the past already, embellished by the same innocent laugh, the same little noise of scissors dropped upon the table and needle pricking the linen, the same crumpling of the turned leaf, the dear faces gone for ever, gathered then around the family lamp, alas! so roughly extinguished!

Now that he had obtained admission into

this charming family, he was always there, took his lessons among the young girls, and mustered the necessary boldness to chat with them when the father shut his ledger. Everything here was a relief to that whirling life into which he was thrown by the luxurious worldliness of the Nabob. He refreshed himself in that atmosphere of honour and simplicity, and tried to forget the wounds inflicted by a hand indifferent rather than cruel.

'Some women have hated me; other women have loved me;
But she, who has most wounded me, has neither hated nor loved me.'

Such a woman as Henri Heine speaks of in those lines, it had been Paul's fate to meet. Felicia received him with hearty welcome whenever he visited her. To none did she turn a kindlier face. She kept in store for him a particular smile, in which beamed the pleasure of an artist's eye resting on a loved type, and the interest of a *blasé* mind awakened

by something new, however simple that new thing might seem. She liked his reserve, startling in a 'méridional,' the correctness of his judgment, unbiassed by any artistic or worldly-wise formula, and enlivened with a dash of originality. It was something different from the praise expressed by the zig-zag motion of a brother artist's thumb, different from the friendly compliments on her manner of hitting off a fellow, from those babyish expressions of admiration, those 'cha . . aming, vewy nice,' with which young swells gratified her, as they sucked the knobs of their sticks. He, at least, said nothing like that. She used to call him 'Minerva,' because of his apparent quietness and his regular profile. As far off as she saw him, she would say:

'Here is Minerva! Good morning, fair goddess. Lay down your helmet, and let us have a chat.'

But that familiar, almost sisterly, tone, convinced the young man of the uselessness of his

love. He felt he never could penetrate deeper into that womanly intimacy devoid of affection, and that he lost every day a little of the charm of novelty, in the eyes of that woman, *ennuyé* almost from her birth, who seemed to have lived her life already, and found in everything she heard or saw the insipidity of well-known sensations. Felicia was tired out with the things of life. Her art alone procured her some distraction, raised her, and carried her into fairy-land, from which she fell again all bruised, astonished that her waking should feel so much like a fall. She used to compare herself to those transparent medusas, so fresh and lively in the waving water, which break on the shore into little gelatinous puddles. During those artistic reveries, when the mind is absent and the hand resting heavily on the chisel, Felicia, losing all control over her mind, would become fierce, morose, teasing, and harassing—the revenge of human weaknesses against great brains when they are overwrought. After she had

brought tears into the eyes of all those who loved her, rummaged painful recollections or enervating anxieties, reached the bare and uneven ground of fatigue, as she must always put some fun into the saddest realities, she would shake off whatever *ennui* remained in her, by uttering the cry of a tired wild beast, something between a yawn and a roar, which she called the cry of the 'jackal in the desert,' and which made the good Crenmitz turn pale in the midst of her lazy repose.

Poor Felicia! Her life was truly a frightful desert, when art did not enliven it with its mirage; a sad flat desert where everything became lost and levelled in the same boundless monotony: the *naïve* love of a youth of twenty, the passing attention of an amorous duke—and all covered with the barren sand blown by a burning fate. Paul felt this barrenness, and wished to escape it; but something held him back like a weight which unwinds a chain; and in spite of the calumnies he had heard,

and the oddness of the strange creature, he found great delight in staying with her, at the risk of carrying away, from this long loving contemplation, nothing but the despair of the believer who has only images to worship.

The refuge was over there, in that distant neighbourhood where the wind blew so hard, without preventing the flame from rising white and straight; it was the family circle presided over by Bonne-maman. Oh! *she* was not wearied, she never uttered the cry of the 'jackal in the desert;' her life was too well filled. She had plenty to do: her father to encourage, to cheer up; the children to teach; all the material comforts of a home left without a mother to attend to—anxieties which woke up with the dawn, and which the evening lulled to sleep, unless it brought them back in a dream; —an unwearied devotion, displaying itself without apparent effort:—a very convenient thing for poor human egotism, because it expects no gratitude, and is hardly felt, so light is its hand.

She was not the courageous girl who works to support her parents, runs the whole day from house to house to give lessons, and forgets in the stir of a hard profession all the miseries of her home. No, she had understood her task differently; a sedentary bee, she limited her attention to the hive, and never was her buzzing heard outside, in the open air, and amid the flowers. She had a thousand things to do: in turn a tailor, a milliner, a mender of clothes, a teacher of the piano, a governess, and, lastly, the bookkeeper of the family; for Monsieur Joyeuse, incapable of assuming any responsibility, left with her the free disposal of the family resources. As sometimes happens in families which have begun in comfort, Aline, being the eldest, had been brought up in one of the best boarding-schools in Paris. Elise had been there two years with her; but the two youngest, coming too late, had been sent to small day-schools of the neighbourhood, and had their education to complete: a difficult

thing that, the youngest, laughing over every trifle, with a healthy, happy, youthful peal—the warbling of a lark drunk with green corn and flying out of sight, far away from the desk and books — the other, Mademoiselle Henriette, ever haunted by her ideas of grandeur, her love of finery, did not, any more than the youngest, take kindly to her work. That young lady of fifteen, who had inherited from her father an easy imagination, already arranged her life beforehand, and declared formally that she would marry some one of the *noblesse*, and would never have more than three children —a boy for the name, and two little girls to dress them alike.

'All right,' said Bonne-maman; 'you shall dress them alike, but, in the meanwhile, let us attend to our participles.'

But the one who gave her most trouble was Elise, who had presented herself three times for examination, and always unsuccessfully, always plucked for her history, and pre-

paring herself again, filled with a great terror and a distrust of her powers, which made her take everywhere with her, and open at every moment, that unfortunate French history—in the omnibus, in the street, and even at the breakfast-table. Already verging into womanhood, and very pretty, she had lost that mechanical memory of childhood, in which dates and events engrave themselves for life. Amid other pre-occupations, the lesson passed away from her mind in one minute. In spite of the evident application of the scholar—her long lashes closing over her eyes, her curls sweeping the pages, and her rosy lips agitated with a little attentive quivering—she would repeat ten times together: 'Louis le Hutin, 1314—1316.' 'Philip le Long, 1316—1322. . . . 1322. Ah! Bonne-maman, I am done for. . . . I shall never know!' Then would Bonne-maman come to the rescue, help her to fix her attention, to store up some of those dates of the

middle ages, hard and barbarous like the helmets of the warriors of those times. And in the intervals of those numerous labours, of that general and constant superintendence, she yet found time to make up pretty things, to pull from her work-basket some small crochet-work or some embroidery, which no more left her than young Elise her French history. Even while talking, her fingers never remained idle one minute.

'You never rest!' de Géry would say to her, while she counted in a low voice the stitches of her tapestry: 'Three, four, five,' to mix the shades.

'But this is rest,' she would answer. 'You men cannot imagine how useful to the mind of women is needlework; it settles the thoughts, marks by a stitch the minute that passes. What sorrows are soothed, what troubles are forgotten, thanks to this physical attention, to the repetition of a constant motion, in the monotony of which we quickly find again the

balance of our faculties. That does not prevent me from attending to what is said around me, from listening to you better still than I should do if I were idle. . . . Three, four, five.'

Oh, yes, she was listening. You could see that by the glow of her face, by the way in which she straightened herself up all at once, her needle in the air, the thread stretched on her uplifted little finger. Then she went off with her work again, sometimes dropping an apt and meaning word, which seemed to echo again the thoughts of Paul. Like natures, like responsibilities and duties, brought these young people nearer together, and made them take an interest in each other's concerns. She knew the names of his two brothers, Pierre and Louis, his plans for their future welfare, when they should leave school. Pierre wished to be a sailor. 'Oh! no; not a sailor,' said Bonne-maman; 'it would be better for him that he should come to you here.' And as he

confessed that he dreaded the life of Paris for them, she laughed off his terrors, called him a provincial, for she was full of affection for the town where she was born, where she had grown virtuously, and which, in return for her love, gave her her liveliness, her refinement, her chaffing good humour—all of which might induce one to think that Paris, with its rain, its fog, its sky which is no sky at all, is the true fatherland of women, whose nerves it spares, whose patience and intelligence it developes.

Every day Paul de Géry learnt to appreciate Mademoiselle Aline more and more—he alone in the house called her Aline—and, strange to say, it was Felicia who was the means of bringing them closer together. What relations could there be between that artist's daughter, whose mind was carried up to the highest spheres, and that little *bourgeoise*, lost at the farthest extremity of a faubourg? Relations of childhood and friendship, common recollections, the great playground of Madame Belin's school,

where they had played together for three years. Paris is full of these chances. A name which happened to be mentioned in the conversation made Paul ask suddenly, not without surprise:

'What! do you know her?'

'Know Felicia? We were together in the first class, and our desks stood side by side. We had the same garden. What a good, handsome, intelligent girl she was, to be sure!'

And seeing the pleasure he took in listening to her, Aline recalled the time so lately gone, which constituted her past life, something to look back upon, full of charm and melancholy, as the past always is. 'How very lonely dear little Felicia's life was, to be sure! On Thursdays, when the pupils were called to the parlour, nobody came for her, except, from time to time, a good lady, a little odd, a former dancer 'twas said, whom Felicia called the "Fairy;"—she had pet names for all those she loved, and whom she transfigured in her

imagination. They saw each other during the holidays. Although Madame Joyeuse refused to send Aline into Monsieur Ruys' studio, she nevertheless invited Felicia to pass days at her house—days always too short, in which the two young girls worked, played the piano together, made plans for the future, and in short chatted in full liberty.

'Oh! when she spoke to me of her art, with that ardour which she brought into everything, how happy I was to listen to her! She made me understand many things about which I should never have had the least idea but for her. Even now, when we go to the Louvre with papa, or to the exhibition of the 1st of May, that strange emotion, which you feel before a fine statue, a good picture, carries me back at once to Felicia. In my girlhood she has been to me the incarnation of art, and that went well with her beauty, her somewhat abrupt but hearty disposition, where I felt something superior to myself, which raised me very high, but

without frightening me! . . . She ceased to see me all at once. I wrote to her; no answer. Then she became famous, and I had great sorrows, duties which took up all my time. . . . and of all that friendship—very deep, however, since I can't speak of it without—three, four, five—there remains nothing but old memories which I stir like cold ashes——'

Bending over her work, the valiant girl went on hurriedly counting her stitches, stifling her emotion in the capricious designs of her tapestry; whilst de Géry, much affected on hearing the testimony of these pure lips, which seemed a sufficient answer to the libels of some repulsed dandy or jealous comrade, felt that he was restored to his own esteem, and that he could again feel pride in his love. This sensation was so sweet to him that he often came back to experience it again, not only on lesson evenings, but on other evenings too; and that he almost forgot to visit Felicia, in order to have the pleasure of hearing Aline speak of

her. One evening as he was leaving the Joyeuses, Paul found on the steps the neighbour, Monsieur André, who was waiting for him, and took his arm feverishly.

'Monsieur de Géry, I wish to have a few words with you. Will you kindly come up to my rooms?'

As he said that, his voice trembled, and his eyes flashed behind his spectacles—the only thing about his face that was visible in the night.

Between the two young men there existed only the commonplace intercourse which is found between two persons visiting in the same house, when no other bond unites them, and when they seem, in fact, to be separated by a certain natural antipathy, a certain constitutional difference of dispositions. What could André have to say? De Géry followed very much puzzled.

The aspect of the little studio, shining under its glass roof, the empty chimney, the

wind blowing outside and making the candle-light flicker—the only flame that, lighting the watching hours of the poor and solitary young man, cast its gleam on the scattered scrawls—in short, the peculiar atmosphere of inhabited places which enables one to breathe, so to speak, the souls of the dwellers, made de Géry understand the excited appearance of André Maranne, his long floating hair thrown back, his oddity of appearance, which might be excused, considering he paid for it the price of a life of sufferings and privations; and his sympathy went straight to the courageous young man whose fierce energy he guessed at a glance. But André was too much moved to notice what was passing in Paul's mind. As soon as the door was shut,

'Monsieur de Géry,' said he, in the tone of a stage hero addressing the villainous seducer, 'Monsieur de Géry, I am not yet a Cassandra——'

And seeing that de Géry remained astounded, he added,

'Yes, we understand one another — I know very well what brings you to Monsieur Joyeuse's; nor has the warm welcome you meet there escaped my observation. You are rich, noble; it is impossible to hesitate between you and the poor poet who follows a ridiculous trade till success comes, if it ever comes— but I shall not tamely submit to the loss of my happiness—we must fight, sir, we must fight,' repeated he, excited by the calmness of his rival. 'I have long loved Mademoiselle Joyeuse; that love is the whole hope of the hard, painful life I lead; it gives me strength and spirits to bear up against it. I have nothing else in the world, and I would rather die than give it up.'

What a strange thing is a human soul! Paul did not love that charming Aline. His heart belonged wholly to another. He thought of her as a very sweet friend, but still only a friend. Well, the idea that Maranne loved her, that she probably requited his love, made

his whole frame quiver with jealous rage. He asked André, rather sharply, whether Mademoiselle Joyeuse was aware of those feelings he indulged for her, and whether she had authorised him to proclaim his rights.

'Yes, sir; Mademoiselle Elise knows I love her, and before your frequent visits——'

'Elise? Is it Elise you love?'

'Whom else? The two others are too young——'

How thoroughly at one was he with the family traditions! For him Bonne-maman, with her touching grace and her twenty years, was quite hidden behind her venerable name and responsible duties.

A short explanation followed. When André became calmer, he apologised to de Géry, made him sit down in an arm-chair of carved wood, on which his customers used to pose for their portraits, and they were soon chatting together like two old friends, though the interview had begun in the rather sharp

manner we have described. Paul confessed that he, too, was in love, and that he only came to Monsieur Joyeuse's to speak of the girl he loved with Bonne-maman, who used formerly to know her.

'Just like me,' said André. 'Bonne-maman is my confidant. But we have not dared to speak to the father yet. My position is too humble and precarious. Ah! when my *Révolte* comes out!' . . .

Then they spoke of that famous drama *Révolte*, at which, for the last six months, he had been working night and day, which had kept him warm during the winter—a hard winter too, but made milder by the magic of composition which had even the power to transform the little studio. It was there, in that narrow room, that all the heroes of his play had appeared to the poet like familiar kobolds, falling from the roof, or riding on moonbeams; and with them the high-warp tapestry, the brilliant chandeliers, the park

stretching in the background with porches bathed in light, all the fancied splendour of stage decorations, all the glorious tumult of a first night! And the rain lashing the panes of glass, the bill-board wildly dashing against the door, were transformed by his imagination into loud applause; whilst the wind moaning below in the melancholy mason's yard, and coming up to him like floating voices brought from afar, resembled the murmur which reaches the corridor when the door of a box is opened and gives passage to the voice of success, the hum of private conversation, and the buzz of the crowd. It was not only money and fame that his play was to procure him, but something more precious still. With what care, therefore, did he turn over the leaves of his manuscript, written on five large copy-books with blue covers, copy-books like those the Levantine spread about on the ottoman where she took her siesta, and which she slashed so unmercifully with her dictatorial pencil.

As Paul in his turn approached the table, in order to examine the *chef d'œuvre*, his attention was attracted to a female portrait, richly framed, and which seemed to preside over the artist's work. Elise, no doubt? Not so. André had not yet acquired the right of taking from its protecting wrapper his little friend's portrait. This one represented a woman of some forty years of age, gentle-looking, fair, and extremely elegant. At that sight, de Géry uttered an exclamation.

'Do you know her?' asked André Maranne.

'Yes, that is Madame Jenkins, the wife of the Irish doctor. I was at their party this winter.'

'She is my mother.'

And the young man added in a lower voice,

'Madame Maranne married for the second time Doctor Jenkins. You are surprised, are not you, to see me so hard up when my parents are so well off? But you know, chance

brings sometimes the most different dispositions together in the same family. My father-in-law and myself never could pull well together. He wanted me to be a doctor, and my taste leads me to write. Then, to avoid continual rows which made my mother unhappy, I left their house and endeavoured to work my way up quite alone, without the help of anybody. Hard lines, though! no cash—all the money belongs to that—Monsieur Jenkins. I must do something for a living, but what? You know how difficult it is for so-called educated men like us to decide that question. Only think, with all my fine education, this child's play—photography—is the only thing I could think of to make a living by. I had a few savings; I employed them in the first outlays, and established myself far away, at the very end of Paris, in order that my parents might not feel annoyed. Between us, I do not think I shall ever make a fortune by photography. The first times were particularly hard.

Nobody came; or, if an unfortunate customer came, I was sure to miss him. There he lay, spread upon the plate, a dull and vague mixture, looking more like a ghost than anything else. One day there came a wedding-party, the bride all in white, the bridegroom with a waistcoat as wide as that!—and all the guests in white gloves, which they wished to be taken with the rest, for the rarity of the fact! Nay, I thought I should go mad. Those black faces, the large white blotches of the dress, of the gloves, of the orange-blossoms; the bride looking like a queen of Niam-Niams under her crown which melted away in her hair! They were all most kind to me; they cheered me up after every failure; and I began them again twenty times at least, and kept them here till night, when they left to go to their wedding-dinner. Only fancy, the whole wedding-day passed in a photographer's studio!'

Whilst André was relating, with some humour, the disappointments of his life, Paul

remembered Felicia's angry tirade on the subject of Bohemians, and all she had said to Jenkins respecting those courageous and aspiring young men, undismayed by trials and privations of any kind. He also thought of Aline's passion for her dear Paris, of which he only knew the unwholesome eccentricities, whereas the big town concealed in its folds so much unknown heroism and so many noble illusions. That impression, already felt under the protection of the Joyeuses' lamp, he experienced again in the colder and more feverish atmosphere of this room, where he saw, moreover, that the cultivation of art brought with it the discouragements of doubt and visions of uncertain glory. His sympathies were quickened as Maranne spoke of Elise, of her hard examination to pass, of the difficulties of photography, of all the uncertainties of his present life, which would certainly end as soon as *Révolte* was played. A touching smile

accompanied, on the poet's lips, that hope so oft uttered, and which he was the first to deride in order to deprive others of the right of doing so.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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